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Story, restorying, negotiation: Emergent bilingual children making the transition to school

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**STORY, RESTORYING, NEGOTIATION:
EMERGENT BILINGUAL CHILDREN MAKING
THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the
award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

University of Wollongong

by

Kathryn Harden-Thew

BA DipEd (UNE), MEd (UOW)

**School of Education
Faculty of Social Sciences**

2014

Certification

I, Kathryn Joy Harden-Thew, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Signed:

Kathryn Harden-Thew

Date: 22 October 2014

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Gloria.

Your passion for teaching and dedication to consistently giving to and loving those
you taught lit my own desire to teach.

Your commitment to supporting my study has been such an encouragement.

Thank you

~

And to my sons, Joshua and Nathanael

– strong men in the making –

Thank you for never complaining.

I have no idea how you did that!

As always, my hat is off to you and my heart is yours.

~

And

In memory of Lilian Raseta

My dear friend and neighbour

~

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To my participants, though you aren't named, especially the six children who so beautifully shared your experiences of transition to school and to your families who shared their lives. Without your kindness and willingness to welcome me into your homes and classrooms this investigation would never have begun – thank you. And to the teachers and schools who opened their doors and allowed me to observe those first weeks of Kindergarten – thank you.

To my study friends – how can I begin to thank you for your kindness in putting up with my foibles? Janine, Catherine and Rosie, Mark, Hien and Jonnell – thanks for your friendship, it's been an honour to study with you and fun to be friends; and to my office mates, Nici and Sharon, thanks for your robust senses of humour and thoughtful friendship, both appreciated with love.

Reflecting on this long haul, it's been an adventure, sometimes full of self-doubt, but also full of discovery. The bleak transcribing weeks are fading but the friendships, activity, conferences and simply being, remain strong. In all this my lovely friends and family have been such an encouragement. Josh and Ned – thanks for loving and encouraging me! Mum, Rosie, Mim, Karen and Eileen – endless support, encouragement, laughter and shoulders – thanks girlies.

Abstract

Successful transition to school has been found to be a key factor in later school success. Despite this, there have been few studies conducted which explore the lived experiences of children and their families in this critical period, and fewer that have focused on emergent bilingual children in an English-medium context.

This inquiry aimed to reveal the lived experiences of three emergent bilingual children and their families as they made the transition to school, with particular reference to their home literate practice and preparation for school. This study focused on the ways the child-participants negotiated their language and literacy capital from the home context, as well as their identities as learners, in the classroom with peers and teachers.

This qualitative study is informed by a Symbolic Interactionist framework. Symbolic Interactionism centres on meaning making as a social co-construction (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003). Pivotal to this framework is the notion of negotiation of identity (Denzin, 1989).

Using a Narrative Inquiry design, data were drawn from family conversations with the child-participants and their families; interviews with each child's teacher; classroom observations conducted over the first term of Kindergarten (the first year of compulsory schooling in New South Wales, Australia); artefacts gathered from the homes and classrooms; and reflexive researcher journaling. In order to bring together the many parts of this mosaic, that is each narrative, a number of lenses were employed to view the collected data. These lenses were critical, allowing the 'voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals' to be heard (Denzin, 1989, 83). The three narratives presented are restoried from the view point of the home, the parents and the children. Other voices are also heard, significantly, the teachers'. Opening up the home lived experience of bilingual families provides insight into the literate activity and preparations for school that these families made, families who are traditionally labelled as outside the mainstream. The findings of this thesis explore the connections between the home

and school settings as the participating children and their families made this crucial transition. They have highlighted disconnections despite the determination of the children and families and the good will of the teachers.

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Chapter 1

Entry to a story: Introduction

Entry to a story:

Introduction

Story, restoring, negotiation:

Emergent bilingual children making the transition to school

Purpose of the inquiry

The purpose of this qualitative study is to use a narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Reissman, 2008) to explore the transitions of three emergent bilingual children from home to school, children who are often considered to be outside the mainstream in the educational sphere. This narrative study has been conducted in order to reveal the home literate practices of the participating children and families, prior-to-school. The children were then observed in the school setting as they negotiated their home practices to establish their identities with peers and teacher. This has revealed a chronology of these children's lived experiences within a period of personal change and at a time of increased institutional pressure on practitioners.

With literate practice central to this study, it is vital to understand the definition of literacy that has been employed in this thesis. Literacy, including the acquisition of language/s, begins long before entrance to school. It has been well established that from birth children begin to interact with significant others, acquiring language and literacy practices (Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Gregory, 2006; Young, 2003). Significant to this is an understanding of literacy as social practice, negotiated through ongoing interaction, that it is 'reading, writing, speaking and listening, and involves the knowledge and skills required to engage in activities required for effective functioning in the community' (Hill, 2006, 3). This definition of literacy positions children as 'active learners and problem solvers, and emphasises the

importance of connecting to children's worlds so that learning is relevant and builds on what children already know' (Hill, 2006, 3).

Therefore, this inquiry reveals the children's and families' small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) of their home practices, specifically those related to literacy, language and preparation for school. Also how the children and families negotiate their identities in the school context, specifically how the children negotiate their identities as learners; and how the children's capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Thomson, 2002) is recognised and valued in this new setting.

This inquiry has two aims. The first aim is to clear a space for the voices of the participants. It focusses on the particular stories of these three children and their families during transition to school, with a view to evoking the essence of their lived experience as they enter and negotiate the school system for the first time. Restorying participants' stories has been argued to have transformative value giving validation to the narrative research design (Angen, 2000). That is, personal stories have value in simply being told. In this study each narrative allows the reader greater insights into the lived experiences of children learning English and becoming literate within the Australian school system.

Traditionally children and those labelled as coming from 'minority groups' have been described as silent or unheard in 'mainstream' research (Drury, 2007; Parke, Drury, Kenner & Robertson, 2002). I have attempted to use this inquiry to simply clear a space for the voices of the participants to be heard, thus altering the power balance within the researcher-participant relationship. In order to do so, as researcher, I took up the role of learner, thereby freeing my participants, both children and adults, to speak as experts of their lived experience. Whereas other studies speak to the giving of voice to participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Drury, 2007); and studies with a Constructivist paradigm take up a stance which denotes the multiple voices of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011); this inquiry questions this power imbalance.

The second aim of this inquiry, in restorying the children's and families' particular stories, is to reveal the themes that occur within and across the three narratives. In doing this, these narratives allow educators, policy makers and other key stakeholders opportunities to hear voices often unheard in the educational sphere. While no claim of statistical significance can be made with such a small sample, there is a significant place for such a study in creating local theory. These 'localised narratives' (Quinn, 2004, 71) create 'webs of connections' (O'Shea, 2008, 58) that move themes from the local to the global. Such research can then underpin larger studies investigating similar themes. Thereby, finding themes with local significance may assist other researchers and practitioners to better understand and support the transitions of children entering school for the first time and their subsequent literacy journey through the schooling experience.

Revealing student lived experience during transition is the focus of this project. As I reflected on my own experience as a practitioner, the main tenets of this study evolved.

My personal story and its significance to the conceptualisation of this inquiry

Reflexivity and axiology are particularly important in narrative research. Understanding the researcher's own background, bias and experience, in connection with those of the participants will assist the reader to understand how each may influence the restorying of the participants' lived experience. As I reflected on my own lived experience I noticed two points relevant to this study.

Firstly, as a primary grades teacher, I realised that I had loved seeing young children growing through learning. Later, working with adult students across several TAFE colleges (Technical and Further Education), this developed into a deep interest in TESOL education (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). I have had an increasing interest in working with groups of people who are traditionally perceived to be outside the mainstream. Additionally, I have had opportunities to

run workshops in the local community, promoting awareness of social justice issues related to poverty and social development. The thread that wove through all levels of interest was one of personal growth and empowerment: seeing young children becoming literate; seeing adult migrants finding their voices, in English; promoting equity.

These 'interests' rapidly turned from pastime to passion. Questions formed about what happens to those in our community, whose voices are unheard, whose cultural or other capital is not valued in the dominant culture?

Secondly, whilst preparing for this project and during the project itself I found a body of research that has established that home literate practice prior-to-school is a significant factor for future success in school and beyond (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff & Ortiz, 2008; Bang, 2009; Young, 2003). My experience as a teacher had led me to believe that if teachers remain unaware of the capital that students bring to school they are unable to activate it in the classroom other than by sheer luck. So taking time to investigate home literate practice and other preparations for school undertaken in the home became significant to me, as I believed these were crucial to classroom practice. I also believed that a clear understanding of home literate practice must inform future policy and curriculum.

However, while my initial interests were increasingly aligned with an interactionist view of potential research topics, the genesis of this qualitative inquiry stemmed from public interest in politically based activity within educational policy, beginning, for me, in 2008. In 2008 I first became aware of the movement of the Australian Federal Government to alter educational policy by introducing a new national curriculum. This topic's design, at first included how policy changes would impact the students I was so interested in, those outside the mainstream. But, this seemed a great distance from the small stories of young children entering school for the first time, which was to become my passion.

Background of the study

In February 2010 the Australian Federal Government released the draft National Curriculum: English (K-10) (2010; now known as the Australian Curriculum: English), which was initially to be implemented across the nation in 2011. However, its release was ultimately staggered across the states from 2012 and the new curriculum document was not released for implementation in New South Wales (NSW) until 2014 in the form of the NSW English K-10 Syllabus (2012). The initial undertaking for this doctoral study was to examine the new curriculum and its impact on students labelled as coming from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds making the transition from home to school. As the time required for finalising and implementing the new curriculum document in NSW extended, so the possibility of researching in this area within the given timeframe receded.

However, despite the curriculum being unavailable to examine through classroom practice, throughout the development and consultative processes, there was great interest among key stakeholders in how the curriculum would support and advance the literacy growth of the very diverse range of children it was being written for. Of particular interest was seeing improved performance from children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Rudd, 2008). There was extensive debate around the many competing needs that students have in reaching literacy achievement valued through the schooling process (Milburn, 2008; Slattery, 2008).

This stakeholder interest in student achievement was heightened by increasing international attention being paid to results from such bodies as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). There was also increased domestic attention paid to national standardised testing (Ferrari, 2010), as seen in the conducting of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment programme (Best Start). With the release of the Australian Curriculum there was some concern about its impact on early school years literacy practice and the flow-on effect of increased standardised testing for the early years and even to the prior-to-school years (Bolt,

2009; Harris, Kervin, Turbill & McKenzie, 2009; Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC), 2008).

At that time there were some 21% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007) of children coming from households where languages other than English are spoken and there was a clear need for priority to be given to these students' literacy learning and support. Since 2007 the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) has revised this figure to almost 30% (2013). Within this growing issue, how educators could best scaffold these children in their transition to school was a key area of concern (CEIEC, 2008). Despite official advocacy for effective literacy education for all children, concern remained that CALD issues would be subsumed under a broader first language literacy focus (Cruickshank & Jones, 2009; Gutierrez *et al*, 2002).

This political scenario was the backdrop to the design of this research project. With increasing pressure on schools and teachers to improve scholastic outcomes, the calls for further investigation of research areas related to both school success and lived experience of children from diverse backgrounds were mounting. Even while this has been happening there has been enormous uncertainty in terms of the future of the curriculum with a review of the curriculum called for in late 2013 (Exley & Kervin, 2014).

The first design plan for this study involved analysing the data collected from transitioning child participants against the background of the new curriculum, with the aim of revealing how the underlying policy changes would affect children perceived to be outside the educational mainstream. However, with the delays to the curriculum's implementation in NSW, this aspect of the layering of the study was removed. While this is now an important point for further research, it is also a point at which the current study gained added focus. In removing the curriculum focus from this research project an opportunity arose to delve further into the lived experience of children in transition. This added to the depth and richness of the analysis of the collected data.

Statement of the problem

As stated in the introductory section of this chapter, the aims of this thesis are to reveal the home literate practices of emergent bilingual children and their families during the period of transition to school. The following research questions framed this study:

- ❖ *What are the lived experiences of the emergent bilingual child-participants as each makes the transition from home to school, with reference to their home literate practices and preparation for school?*

This question identified what the child-participants and their families, deemed necessary and appropriate preparation for beginning school, with particular interest in the family's literate practices, including literacies in more than one language. It explored those literate practices that have been developed and nurtured in the home context. Through ongoing dialogue with the children and families, these individuals' stories have been restoried to reveal the meanings that each family has placed on school readiness and literacy, prior to school.

- ❖ *How are the capital that each child brings to school and their identity negotiated in the Kindergarten classroom, with reference to family activity, teacher practice or school policy?*

This question identified what counts as capital in the school setting and highlights who makes this decision. Further it presents a deep, rich mosaic of the transition process of negotiating recognition of capital and identity in the classroom. It explored early school contact with the child-participants prior to school, the teacher's understanding of the child's home literate practices and other capital that the child brings to school, the use of Best Start by the teacher as an ongoing assessment tool, and any other tools or policy documents that the teacher used as they assessed and scaffolded their students. In examining the structures utilised by the teacher and the teacher's own perceptions of the child's entry performance, further light has been shed on the stories of these children during the transition period.

Significance of this study

This research project's significance lies in taking up the calls for further research that explore the home literate practices of bilingual families during a period of transition, from home to the first year of formal schooling. Previous research has shown that the home practices of families for whom English is their second or subsequent language are largely unknown or ignored in the school context (Compton-Lilly, 2006; Molyneux, 2009; Parke, Drury, Kenner & Robertson, 2002) and that there has been little understanding or a negative understanding of family attitudes toward education (Compton-Lilly, 2009; Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Parke *et al*, 2002) which result in the cultural and linguistic capital that children and their families bring to the school context remaining hidden in that context (Drury, 2007). Prior research has shown that where a smooth transition to school is achieved, the benefits are seen immediately and in the long term in improved social and scholastic outcomes for those children (Thomson, 2002).

In this study literacy is viewed as social practice embedded in the lived experience of the participants' social contexts, where meaning making is intrinsic to every activity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hill, 2006). The question raised by this definition of literacy is, how will the home literate practices and other activities undertaken in the home as preparation for school be recognised, valued and negotiated in the classroom in order to provide a smooth transition to school for these emergent bilingual children?

Successful transition to school, has been found to entail building on children's existing home literacy experiences and resources to ensure success in the early school years and beyond (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Dockett & Perry, 2001).

Emergent bilingual children (Gregory, 2006) enter school with literate practices and skill sets that can differ from those valued in the mainstream school setting or that may be unknown by the classroom teacher. This capital needs to be recognised and valued in the classroom for such children to be able to succeed in the school environment (van Krieken, *et al.*, 2000; Marsh, 2006). Therefore exploring how the

children and their families negotiate their capital in the classroom and how the children establish their identities as learners is research worthy.

Where some similar studies have sought to give voice to a marginalised group (that is, poor or diverse groupings) (eg Drury, 2007), this study seeks to clear a space for the voices of bilingual families and their children as they tell their own stories. My role as researcher altered from expert delivering objective statements, to that of a learner who interacts with children and families who are experts in their lives, restorying their revealed, lived experience. Increasingly, researchers have called for teachers and researchers to respect home activity, to engage with it and to undertake to unpack the capital that every child brings to school (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Feiler, 2005; Hill *et al*, 1998; Thomson, 2002) in order to promote better educational outcomes for all children.

This study reveals the lived experiences of three young emergent bilingual children during the transition from home to school, exploring their home lived experiences and the negotiation that they and their families undertook to establish the children's and families' identities in the school context.

Theoretical underpinnings

The theoretical framework employed in this qualitative study is informed by Symbolic Interactionism which is concerned with how meaning is created through social interaction between individuals. Meaning emerges, co-created by the participants (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003; Scott & Marshall, 2009).

Researchers utilising this framework focus on analysing, through dialogue and observation, the co-created meanings of participants' everyday lived experience. Proponents, Mead and Blumer (Blumer, 1969) argued that symbolic interaction is the basis of and explanation for all human interaction, to be used to analyse meanings of everyday interactions (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1992; Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003; Scott & Marshall, 2009; van Krieken, *et al*, 2000).

'(I)nteractionists are more concerned with the ways in which meaning is always emergent, fluid, ambiguous and contextually bound' (Scott and Marshall, 2009,

p751). Deep familiarity between researcher and participant, ongoing interaction, reflexive dialogue and analysis, careful observation, looking beneath the words or symbols of interaction to determine the underlying patterns or forms of social life (Scott & Marshall, 2009; Creswell, 2007; van Krieken, *et al.* 2000), these are the hallmarks of trustworthiness in narrative research (Angen, 2000) informed by Symbolic Interaction.

This study focusses on how the children and their families make sense of and negotiate their new school reality (Hill, 1997) through discussions in their lived contexts – the home and the school. The focus of this study is placed on the meanings participants negotiate in their everyday lived experiences (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Riessman, 2008), how they act, interact and negotiate in their social contexts, firstly in their home setting and later as they enter school for the first time.

Methodological approach

The research design developed for this qualitative study highlights a number of qualitative methods including unstructured interviews, described herein as family conversations; semi-structured interviews with the teachers; classroom observations and field notes; artefacts were collected and a researcher journal was kept. The data collected was drawn together using a narrative approach (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008; Bamberg, 2006; Reissman, 2008; Richardson, 1990). Narrative inquiry seeks to reveal the participants' small stories (Bamberg, 2006), fluid, altering and continuously being negotiated and produced (Stone & O'Shea, 2012). These highlight the complex nature of the lived experience (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008).

The initial stage of this inquiry, the family conversations and observations, was conducted in the homes of the primary participants, the three children, with their families. The family conversations were driven by the children and their families and included elements of adult-adult talk, researcher-child talk and play. Their teachers were then interviewed and the children were each observed in their

classrooms during the first term of compulsory schooling, Kindergarten. The teachers were then interviewed for a second time and asked to reflect on each child's initial weeks of school experience. Finally the children were again visited in their homes together with their families and also asked to reflect on this period of transition. Of particular interest were the families' home literate practices and how the children and their families negotiated the classroom, establishing their identities in the school context.

Definition of Terms

Terms defined in this section are indicated in bold at the beginning of each entry and as they are referred to in any other entry.

Best Start Kindergarten Assessment (Best Start):

Best Start is an assessment programme that begins in the first week of school and is continued until Year 3. The NSW government implemented this assessment in order to 'ensure that all students are on track in their literacy and numeracy learning by Year 3' (DEC, nd). Best Start was designed to aid teachers in identifying the literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills that each child brings to school when they begin **Kindergarten**. Teachers are then able to use the gathered data to inform their teaching practice.

Community Language School:

Community Language Schools were set up to assist school-aged students to learn and use their community language. They are predominantly government funded with supplementary funding coming from participating families. Classes are conducted outside school hours and are often held in public school premises. In NSW more than 30 000 students attend around 277 community schools each year.

Emergent Bilingual:

This term is used, here, to describe the child-participants in this study and to highlight the linguistic merit they possess. Bilingualism is the ability to communicate in more than one language. Gregory (2006), who coined the term

‘emergent bilingual’, defined it as ‘children who are the first generation in their family to receive formal schooling in the new country... and who are consequently at the early stage of second language learning’ (8). This term recognises both ongoing language learning and the positive nature of language acquisition in more than one language.

Other terms used by teachers, research literature or other documentation are outlined in Chapter 2.

Engine Room:

Used in the **Triple L program**, this term denotes the area the teacher uses to work with small groups of 2, 3 or 4 students for 10 minutes at a time during the main morning activities of the Literacy Block. During this short period the teacher models and guides several activities including reading the selected **home reader**, as well as practising site words and writing. In this one hour period the teacher attends to every student in the class, group by group.

Home Readers:

These **levelled texts** are used in most primary schools in NSW from Kindergarten. Students take home readers one or more days per week. They are used to encourage reading practice in the home.

Interactive Whiteboard (IWB):

An Interactive Whiteboard is a large interactive board that connects to a computer via a projector. Users control the computer using a pen or finger. In the Kindergarten classroom IWB’s are increasingly being used during literacy sessions for students to work corporately on reading activities.

Kindergarten:

In NSW, Kindergarten is the first year of compulsory schooling, located in a classroom within the primary school setting. It is not part of any prior-to-school child care context. Kindergarten begins at the beginning of the academic year (late January). NSW schools have four 10 week terms with the academic year concluding in mid-December.

Language, Learning and Literacy Program (Triple L):

Language, Learning and Literacy (known as L3 or Triple L) is a literacy-based Kindergarten intervention. Students receive daily explicit instruction in reading and writing strategies in small groups of three or four students at a similar level of competence. The goal of the program is to reduce the number of students who require remedial assistance in future years.

Levelled Texts:

From **Kindergarten** until independent reading is achieved, schools in NSW, use texts for home reading which are levelled to indicate reading difficulty. There is currently a 30 level system operating, with Level 30 accepted as independent reading level. These texts are kept in class, used in the literacy block and sent home with students as **home readers**. Nelson Cengage Learning publishes a widely used series of levelled readers referred to as PM Levelled readers (eg PM Level 10).

Literacy:

In this interactionist study, literacy is defined as social practice (Hamilton, 2011; Hamilton & Barton, 2000; Street, 2006), negotiated through ongoing interaction where 'everyday meanings and uses of literacy in specific cultural contexts' (Street, 2006, 37) are co-constructed in every situation.

Literacy involves reading, writing, speaking and listening and requires the knowledge and skills needed for effective social interaction (Hill, 2006). This intricate activity is 'not simple and technical and neutral' (Street, 2006, 37) rather they reflect the richness and complexity of actual literate practice in peoples' lives (Hamilton & Barton, 2000).

In order to build on the rich past experiences and prior knowledge of each child's life, teachers cannot function in isolation (Hamilton, 2011) but rather must acknowledge home practices (Cummins, 1997; Street, 2006). This definition of literacy positions learners as agentic and literacy as inextricably linked to identity formation (Cummins, 2000; Gee, 2000), and highlights the necessity of making

connections between different contexts (Hamilton, 2011) so that learning across contexts is facilitated.

Orientation Programme:

This is often the first point of contact between children and their prospective school. In NSW, Orientation Programmes are run in Term 3 or 4 of the year prior to entrance to **Kindergarten**. These programmes generally include school visits for the children and their families.

Public School:

In NSW the term Public School denotes those schools that are entirely government funded.

Triple L:

see **Language, Learning and Literacy Program**

Thesis overview

This first chapter served to identify the purpose of this study and outline the significance of revealing the lived experience of young emergent bilingual children making the transition from home to school. The theoretical and methodological stance taken in this thesis has been outlined and will be taken up in the following chapters.

The three narratives, each a compilation of the small stories of transition, will explicate the lived experiences of the child-participants and their families as they negotiate the new school context, their identities as learners and as bilingual students. The significance of restorying the small stories of transition will be further argued in later chapters but it is hoped that these intricate mosaics may influence practitioners in their classrooms, researchers and policy makers in the field of education: each of whom has the opportunity to improve the transition experience of children who have long been referred to in the literature as marginalised in the Australian educational context.

Chapter 2 Reviewing past stories: Literature Review

This chapter reviews past literature. It briefly reviews the identifying or labelling of children with diverse linguistic and cultural capital; the home literate practices and other preparation for school undertaken particularly by families who are bilingual; a discussion of the importance of transition to school and the critical nature of hearing the voices of children and families who do not easily fit into mainstream expectations of public schooling. Finally, there is a focus on the home-school relationship. This chapter draws together related calls for further research.

Chapter 3 Underpinning the stories: Theoretical and methodological supports

The theoretical framework underpinning this research project is outlined in this chapter. This study is a qualitative inquiry informed by Symbolic Interactionism and taking up a narrative approach to the collection, analysis and presentation of the collected data.

This chapter also establishes the methods used in data collection and introduces the many participants in this complex undertaking. Utilising a narrative approach, data were collected through family conversations, teacher interviews, classroom observations, field notes and researcher reflexivity. Each of these methods are explained and justified. A more detailed explanation of the lenses used to analyse the data is outlined in Chapter Four.

Chapter 4 Out of the mouths of babes: The path from story to restorying

This chapter outlines the processes used to draw together the collected data in each child's narrative, using the small stories told. It describes the six lenses used to organise the data and provides a link between the theoretical framework and methodologies and the presentation of the narratives in the following chapter (Chapter Five: Findings).

Chapter 5 Children in Transition: Family Stories

Chapter Five explicitly restories the small stories of transition of the three child-participants and their families, also drawing on interviews of their teachers and observations made in their classrooms. Each narrative moves from the home context, prior to school, into the classroom during the first term of Kindergarten. Each narrative chronicles the transition in the children's, families' and teachers' own words drawn together as a mosaic, piece by piece, developing the thick, rich description essential to narrative inquiry. Finally, each narrative includes interpretive comment, employed as a device to assist the reader in making sense of the various small stories, contexts and artefacts presented.

Chapter 6 Reflecting on stories of transition: Discussion and conclusion

The discussion and concluding chapter considers the research questions first presented in the introductory chapter in the light of the findings of this study. It highlights how language learning and literate practice were enacted by each family, observed by the researcher and negotiated in the school setting during transition to school. Home literate practice and other preparation for school is discussed in the first section of the chapter; while the second section addresses how the child-participants and, at times, their family members negotiated their capital, and therefore their identity, in the classroom.

Finally, this chapter of this thesis explores the implications of the study for emergent bilingual children, their families; for teachers and schools; and for policy makers. It also draws conclusions about the implications that the methodology of this study has for future research designs. These implications have the potential to inform research, practice and policy.

Chapter 2

Reviewing past stories: Literature Review

Reviewing past stories:

Literature Review

‘Kindergarten is a context in which children make important conclusions about school as a place where they want to be and about themselves as learners vis-à-vis schools. If no other objectives are accomplished, it is essential that the transition to school occur in such a way that children and families have a positive view of the school and that children have a feeling of perceived competence as learners.’

Bailey (1999, xv)

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, this project stemmed from my passion to understand how bilingual adults and emergent bilingual children make the transition to an English speaking primary school environment combined with my interest in how emergent bilingual children negotiate their identities as learners in the classroom. Taking up a narrative inquiry approach, this study sought to explore transition to school of children who are often considered to be outside the mainstream of educational practice. As Bailey (1999) notes (in the introduction to this chapter), it is essential that transition to school is as smooth as possible so as to encourage positive academic and social outcomes for children during transition and beyond.

This review of the literature serves three purposes. Firstly, it positions the current study within the available literature on investigations of bilingual children with particular reference to understandings of their literate practices in the home and identity construction, to transition to school, and to home-school partnerships. Stemming from this purpose, four main areas of discussion have arisen, these are

shown in Figure 2.1.

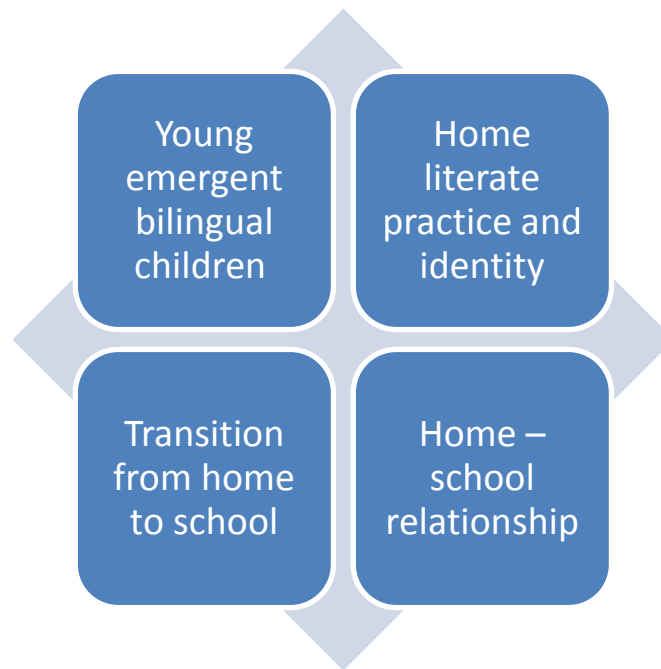
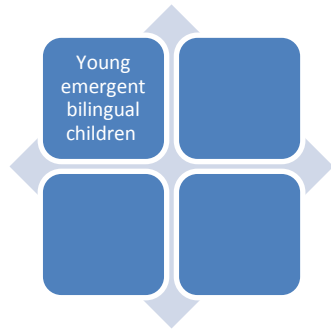


Figure 2.1 Literature Review Model

Secondly, this review highlights the necessity for adopting a theoretical framework which is informed by social constructionism and interpretivism, specifically Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Creswell, 2007; Denzin, 1989; Fraser, 2011; Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003). The theoretical stance taken in designing and carrying out this project, is considered throughout the chapter. The theoretical underpinnings of this study are interwoven throughout the examination of the literature and the understanding of both the prior successes of research outcomes and their shortcomings.

Finally, this literature review aims to demonstrate the need for the current inquiry through identifying the gaps in the research. This is attended to at the end of the chapter.

Young emergent bilingual children



As stated, the period of transition from home to school, is considered vital to children's academic and social outcomes. While, since the 1970s, there has been an increase in the investigation of transition to school for emergent bilingual children (Heath, 1983; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Kenner, *et al*,

2008; Reyes, 2012), there have also been calls for further investigation of this field, particularly with reference to hearing these children's voices within the research (Drury, 2007; Potter & Briggs, 2003; Reyes, 2012). These calls come amid ongoing increases in the numbers of students in Australian schools who speak more than one language.

In order to highlight the pertinent literature, there is a need to first explore the many terms that have been used, over time, to identify the children who participated in this study and those many others who form the almost 30% of the NSW school body (DEC NSW, 2013) by having linguistic expertise in more than one language as they enter school.

Identifying or labelling: terms used in the education system and in this research project

Across the English speaking world, there have been many terms used to denote children who speak more than one language. In New South Wales, these children have been variously described, by the government body that attends to education (this governmental department has undergone a number of name changes) as –

- *ESL* (English as a second language) (Bang, 2009);
- *NESB* (non English speaking background) (Guo, 2005);
- *LBOTE* (language backgrounds other than English) (DEC NSW 2013);
- *EAL/D* -more recently the national board that has been commissioned to write the new National Curriculum has utilised the term *EAL/D* (English as an additional language/dialect) in its documentation (ACARA, 2014).

- *CALD* - These children have also been called *children of CALD background* (culturally and linguistically diverse) (Sanagavarapu, 2010; Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005).

Similarly, in the United States, bilingual students have been variously termed *children of diversity*, *minority children*, and *LEP* children (limited English proficiency) (Reyes, 2012).

While each of these terms has some link to the reality of the children they are used to describe, each can be seen to contribute in some way to the viewing of children who speak more than one language, in 'deficit' terms (Reyes, 2012, 308). In short, these terms highlight what the children cannot do rather than identifying them by their emergent expertise or any benefit that may be attached to the acquisition of more than one language.

The problem that arises with the use of such terms and, more generally, with identifying a person by what he or she cannot do or cannot do well, is that the term used becomes a stigmatising label, a negative association in identity formation (Jensen, 2011). These labels are viewed by many researchers as terms of deficit (Anderson, Kenner & Gregory, 2008; Drury, 2007; Gearon, Miller and Kostogriz, 2009; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Parke *et al*, 2002; Reyes, 2012). Young argues that research has shown that teachers often 'blame' disadvantaged or culturally different children for their personal deficit rather than 'credit being given for existing knowledge, skills and understandings' (2003, 5). While not the same, what Bourdieu (1977) terms *capital* and Gonzalez *et al* (2005) describe as *funds of knowledge*, which is, in this case, extra linguistic merit and experience, is often overlooked or ignored in the school context (Molyneux, 2009).

Bourdieu's term, capital – whether social, cultural, linguistic, economic or symbolic – is what children bring with them as they enter school for the first time. Lareau (1987) explains that there is advantage and disadvantage linked to the cultural capital each child brings to school. Similarly, Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti (2005) explain how schools fail to build on the expertise that children bring with them to

school, their *funds of knowledge*. They state that *funds of knowledge* is based on a simple premise – ‘that people are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge’ (ix). These funds, socially constructed in prior-to-school settings, (as with Bourdieu’s theory) may or may not match those valued in the school. Thomson (2002) notes that this capital that each child brings to school is like a ‘virtual schoolbag full of things they have already learned at home, with their friends, and in and from the world in which they live’ (1). She adds, that the school uses ‘curriculum and assessment regimes... the means of creating a hierarchy of cultural capital’ (4), to differentiate between the capital of different children. Reyes (2012) argues that these labels (including ESL, EALD/L, CALD, LEP) have a common thread which is the ‘implication that bilingualism entails a deficit... none of these terms acknowledge bilingualism as a part of the cultural capital that the children bring to school’ (308). To begin to remove this deficit image, these children in schools must be addressed in terms that denote their particular abilities and the capital they bring to the school needs to be recognised and valued.

In this study, the term ‘emergent bilingual’ is used to highlight the linguistic merit of these children, not that this speaks to other forms of capital that they may bring to the classroom, but that it seeks to address this one area. Bilingualism, the ability to communicate in more than one language, has been extended, in this study, to ‘emergent bilingualism’, building on the work of Gregory (1996), who coined the term (and others - Molyneux, 2009; Reyes, 2012 – who have used it). While the term ‘bilingual’ tends to imply mastery of two (or more) languages, Gregory defined emergent bilinguals as ‘children who are the first generation in their family to receive formal schooling in the new country, who do not speak the language of the host country at home and who are consequently at the early stage of second language learning’ (1996, 8). This term, acknowledging a level of linguistic expertise, ‘recognises the ongoing nature of children’s bilingual development’ (Reyes, 2012, 309) and points to the necessity of ongoing support in both languages. As the Australian school population continues to become more

diverse (ABS, 2007; DET NSW, 2013b), the issue of identifying or labelling children who speak more than one language is a growing concern.

Globalisation, standardisation and language diversity

The increasing cultural and linguistic diversity seen in Australian schools is reflective of a more general population mobility. With increasing population mobility and in an era of globalisation, Anderson *et al* (2008) notes that the English speaking world, continues to chase a 'deplorable monolingualism' (187). Lo Bianco (2009) points to Australia's policy of monolingualism in schools despite, and alongside, its public promotion of the benefits of multiculturalism across the community (Australia's Multicultural Policy, 2012). He claims that 'efficiency discourses are the strongest legitimising rationales' in how public education is funded' (Lo Bianco, 2009, 114) and the cost of acknowledging bilingual- or multilingual-ism in schools is great. One direct impact of such discourses has been a growing emphasis on educational standardisation. Educational standardisation is evidenced in the movement toward a national curriculum, a movement to nationwide literacy and numeracy testing and increasing concern for meeting international literacy and numeracy standards – all of these acknowledging the existence of English as the only medium for educational access across Australia.

In 2008 the Australian National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing regime was introduced across Australia in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Despite empirical evidence that bilingual students require up to seven years of academic tutelage before being equally competent in their second or subsequent language (Molyneux, 2009), these students are required to sit the NAPLAN tests after only one year of school attendance in Australia (National Assessment Program, ACARA, nd). Such a policy stance, seemingly ignores the tenets of multiculturalism which highlights the need for communities to value and respect diversity whilst accommodating difference.

To further underscore this increasing educational performance pressure across the schooling years, in 2010 NSW the Department of Education and Training introduced Best Start, an initiative designed to assess all incoming Kindergarten

students' literacy and numeracy and it has as its aim – to 'ensure that all students are on track in their literacy and numeracy learning by Year 3' (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010). The website notes that: '*Best Start* is inclusive: All children have the opportunity to participate' (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010). However, teachers are limited to a scripted interaction with their new students as they administer this assessment. This scripting is somewhat malleable in the case of children with known disabilities; there is also additional assistance available for gifted students; and there is an information letter for parents available in thirty-five languages. However, there is no explanation of accommodation for students with emergent bilingual practices in this assessment nor is there any acknowledgment of the linguistic needs of these transitioning students (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010).

The above mentioned 'efficiency discourses' enacted in educational policy and standardised national testing (as seen in the *Best Start* assessment), while claiming inclusivity, 'advance what amount to... mono-lingual practices in schooling' (Lo Bianco, 2009, 125). So, despite growing globalisation and increasing language diversity across Australian schools, in an era of accountability (Pianta, 2007), 'advocates of language rights... have to demonstrate benefits in terms of improved efficiencies... measureable outcomes rather than assertions of intrinsic worth' (Lo Bianco, 2009, 124). These increased pressures fail to serve emergent bilingual students well, as their linguistic competences are ignored and their literate practices are assessed only in their second or subsequent language.

While Gearon *et al* (2009) point to the positive approach to bilingualism across Europe, they decry the undervalued or unvalued status of bilingual children across the English speaking world. They go on to state that bilingualism is no longer a minority issue in Australia, a fact that is clearly visible in the national statistics available (and noted in the opening chapter, ABS, 2007, 2008; Doucet & Tudge, 2007). Hammond (2009) states that, across Australia, 'ESL issues' are now mainstream not minority issues. Comparing Australia to other western countries, she states that there is a great deal of diversity in the student population

particularly in urban schools and that in many cities 'student profiles may include up to 80 or 90% of students for whom English is a second or additional language. These students may be drawn from 30 or more linguistic and cultural backgrounds and from diverse socio-economic backgrounds' (Hammond, 2009, 56). While the education of bilingual students has previously been regarded as a minority issue to be addressed by specialist teachers, Hammond contends that there are 'strong grounds for arguing that this is a mainstream issue' (2009, 56). Hammond (2009) continues, that, as such, there is a moral obligation for schools to provide bilingual students access to instruction that offers both high academic challenge and high levels of support. She notes that this is not the current state of educational practice in Australia for bilingual students, where there is poor understanding of the difference between social language competence and academic competence by policy makers and teachers. This lack of understanding and recognition of the changing composition of the Australian (and New South Wales state) student body has led to bilingual students being 'overrepresented in educational underachievement' (Gearon *et al*, 2009, 8).

School policy regarding the education of bilingual students is closely aligned with teacher beliefs and practice. Where educational policy takes up efficiency discourses, curriculum pressures advance the uptake of the discourses by teachers in their classroom activity and lack of knowledge leads to a similar lack of questioning of current practice.

Teacher beliefs and the benefits of bilingualism

The undervaluing or ignoring of the capital that bilingual children bring to monolingual schools is seen to be further entrenched as the beliefs of teachers have been investigated. Parke *et al* (2002) note that 'mainstream educators assume that young bilingual children arrive at school with little experience of literacy' (206) and 'overlook' language literacy in languages other than English (Molyneux, 2009). The literate practices of bilingual families are rarely 'known about' by teachers, although, central to many bilingual children's lives are 'a rich variety of multilingual literacy experiences' (Parke *et al*, 2002, 206).

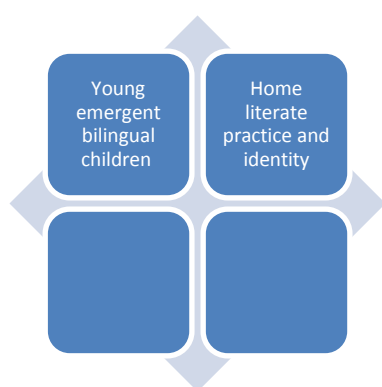
Despite this, Miller (2010) and Molyneux (2009) both argue that teachers do recognise the positive benefits of bilingualism in general, and promote positive attitudes towards multiculturalism. Schools in New South Wales are encouraged to participate in fostering positive attitudes to viewing Australia as a multicultural nation and most schools across the state take an active part in celebrating Harmony Day, 'a day of cultural respect' (Australian Government, nd), with some schools running language learning classes throughout the year.

However, Kenner *et al* (2008) suggest that here teacher knowledge is in deficit. Their research highlighted that teachers, despite *knowing* 'that bilingualism was an asset' (124), did not *know* how to implement bilingual strategies in their mainstream classrooms. This was found to be especially the case where not all children were bilingual and/or where there were different language backgrounds represented in the one classroom. This theme found across the literature will be further examined in the next section of this chapter.

Findings of the Kenner *et al* (2008) study include a list and explanation of the benefits of bilingual education investigated in their research. These included: the growth of self-esteem of bilingual students as their capital was recognised in classroom activity, this was true for even second and third generation bilingual children; understandings of how concepts could be transferred from one language to the other; translation also required children to reformulate ideas and this in turn enriched learning. Kenner *et al* (2008) also described a 'heightened metalinguistic awareness, consolidated through explicit discussion of differences between language structures in mother tongue and English' (121). These benefits were found to have long term positive effects with resulting 'above-average levels of academic proficiency and positive attitudes to the languages involved' (121) (also similar findings in Anderson, 2008; Gearon *et al*, 2009; Hammond, 2009). Therefore, despite findings of the benefits of taking into account the linguistic capital, as well as the needs, of bilingual children in the classroom, research has found that teachers remain ill-informed about the various forms of capital many of their students bring to the classroom.

While educational policy pays lip service to the benefits of multiculturalism, research into classroom activity reveals that bilingual children are still viewed in deficit terms, the labelling of these children adding to the misunderstanding of the value of their linguistic capital and experience. Added to this deficit view of bilingual children held by many teachers and policy makers, is a lack of knowledge or understanding of the multifaceted nature of the capital that these children bring into the classroom from their homes. Lack of understanding of home literate practices in two or more languages, and family background, often further problematizes the plight of bilingual children in the education system.

Home literate practices, preparation for school and identity



Despite some teacher knowledge of the positive benefits of bilingualism in the community and of multicultural policy, classroom practice has often not matched this general acknowledgement. ‘(D)espite the multiethnic composition of the area’ teachers ‘tended to reinforce White middle-class values, interests and concerns’ (Doucet & Tudge,

2007, 313). One of the major factors that influence classroom practice is teacher understanding of the home practices of children entering the classroom (Compton-Lilly, 2009). With some 240 languages spoken in homes across Australia (ABS, 2008), and around 30% of the NSW school population speaking a language other than English at home (NSW DEC, 2013b), it is vital for educators to gain a clear understanding of the experiences of children making this transition from their home environment and heritage or home language to their school environment and English.

Taking into account the disparity evident in recent studies between multicultural policy, teacher knowledge and classroom activity, this study focuses on the stories of emergent bilingual children making the transition to school, opening up their personal and family stories to closer inspection. To date, a small number of studies

have considered the home literate practices of bilingual children and their families and have investigated their preparations for entering school for the first time (Drury, 2007; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Guo, 2005; Parke *et al*, 2002; Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005). These studies' findings highlight the vital nature of such knowledge for practitioners and policy makers to promote targeted classroom content for the increasing numbers of bilingual students beginning school in this country and across the English speaking world, in a period of globalisation. The study outlined in this thesis sought to provide an in-depth encounter, set over a number of months and in two significant sites (the home and the school), with three bilingual families as they prepare their children for school, discussing and sharing their home literate practices, and then observing and reflecting on the children as they negotiate their identity in the school context.

Links between home literate practice, preparation for school and later academic success

Investigations of the home literate practices of families with young children have found a large degree of consensus over several decades that 'children's prior-to-school literate practices are indicative of later school achievement' (Young, 2003, ii). That is, children with a greater level of knowledge prior-to-school were generally able to maintain that scholastic and social advantage as literacy and other achievements continued to be measured (Arnold *et al*, 2008; Bang, 2009, Young, 2003). Espinosa (2007) added that teacher understandings of student school-readiness were inextricably linked to emergent literacy skills, approaches to learning and social competence at Kindergarten entry (also Compton-Lilly, 2009). These were found to be the predictors of future academic success.

Researchers, taking the stance that learning was a social practice, found that this view acknowledged the home as the first context of literacy learning for every child (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Compton-Lilly, 2009; Cummins, 2000; Dickie, 2011; Espinosa, 2007; Feiler, 2005; Gregory, 2006; Heath, 1983; McNaughton, 2001; Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005; Young, 2003). This understanding of literacy learning, positions all actors in the home as agentic (Drury, 2007); socialisation as active and

culturally specific (Young, 2003); and literacy as based on the intent to make sense of social events (Compton-Lilly, 2009; Cummins, 2000; Young, 2003). The actors in the home (that is children, their parents, siblings, grandparents and other caregivers) are noted as having expertise (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Compton-Lilly, 2006, 2009; Feiler, 2005; Gonzalez, *et al*, 2005). Literacy development is then understood to begin long before school in 'real life' activities in the home and community (Young, 2003). Feiler (2005) notes the 'powerful influence of out-of-school learning' (131) and views the home as pivotal to later academic outcomes.

In the 1970s Shirley Brice Heath (1983) conducted an ethnographic study of three disparate communities to explore how they differed from each other and how the differences she found affected or informed school performance and later success or failure. Heath found that educational outcomes were largely dependent on the ways the participants negotiated language in the classroom. The study highlighted how cultural difference across the three communities affected the students' ability to access information in school. Heath showed that home literate practice was taken into the classroom by both students and teachers. In summing up Heath's (1983) landmark study, Cairney and Munsie (1992) noted that 'what was happening in each of these communities was that the place literacy enjoyed in their culture was helping to prepare these children, to greater or lesser extents, to succeed or fail in the school system' (3). Success, or failure, was found to be based on the degree to which school practice and home practice were aligned. Where home and school understandings of literacy and preparation for school were similar, children experienced smoother transitions to school and were found to have greater academic success (Arnold *et al*, 2008; Espinosa, 2007; Guo, 2005). Where teachers valued home literate practices that were similar to their own, they were also found to ignore or misjudge those practices that differed from their own (Compton-Lilly, 2009; Cummins, 2000). Though Heath's (1983) Trackton and Roadville communities both had a variety of literate traditions, only those literate practices of the middle class townspeople were closely aligned to school practice. The compatibility between home and school practice was seen to be the essence of success for the townspeople (also related - Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005).

These findings regarding the link between compatibility of literate practice in the home and school with later academic success, also hold true for research into the home literate practices of bilingual students. Molyneux (2009) found that home literate practices in languages other than English were often overlooked, not noticed or were ignored, in the school setting (also Cummins, 1997; Cummins, 2000). Significant linguistic and cultural resources brought to school, by these children, were frequently under-recognised or undervalued (Lareau & McNamara, 1999; Miller, 2010). Using Thomson's 'virtual schoolbag' analogy (2002, 1), some children's virtual schoolbags have been noted as being left untouched at school, despite being filled with 'knowledges, narratives and interests' (Thomson, 2002, 2) gathered from their prior to school, home experiences. This resulted in the children being less able to negotiate their identities as learners in the classroom (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Cummins, 2000). Molyneux (2009) went further to argue, that 'failure to affirm language competences has amounted to a systematic suppression of minority languages knowledge' which he described as 'evidence of coercive power relations operating in schools' (Molyneux, 2009, 100; also Cummins, 1997; Cummins, 2000). Molyneux's (2009) strong language is also reflected in the Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group's findings, as they note that children are entitled to 'gain access to high quality education that demonstrates respect for existing competencies, cultural heritage and histories' (ETC Research Group, 2011, 3).

Parke, *et al* (2002) identify that the visible and invisible home literate practices of bilingual children, including their language competences, are often only viewed in English. The consequence of this is that teachers, to a large extent, 'do not see the true capacities of their bilingual students because the system is systematically unaware of them' (Parke *et al*, 2002, 197). What continues to be valued in the classroom are the practices that most closely reflect those of the 'White, middle-class' or mainstream culture (and language) of the school (Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Smythe & Toohey, 2009). Newcomer, bilingual children continue to be identified as 'problems' in the school system because they are 'illiterate' and 'schooling typically builds upon the skills and activities familiar to and appropriated by majority

language and culture middle-class children' (Smythe & Toohey, 2009, 272).

Anderson *et al* (2008) note that while 'education for all' is the goal of schooling – 'it appears that the desired goal was education *in English* for all' (184). So while academic success has been linked to entry level literacy knowledge and known home literate practice, these have been shown to be misunderstood by receiving teachers as incoming children/students are only assessed in English. Bilingual and emergent bilingual students continue to have their literacy competencies in languages other than English ignored or undervalued. Answering this gap in teacher knowledge or awareness, the current study investigates the home literate practices of bilingual families' prior-to-school and highlights these practices as they occur in their natural settings.

Literate practices in the home and preparation for school

Bilingual children's home languages have been shown to be ignored or undervalued in the Australian school context and there is an implication that, in this context, 'bilingualism entails a deficit' (Reyes, 2012, 308). For these children, their home language literacy skills (in any language) were also undervalued, unknown and/or un-investigated by their teacher/s. However, where studies have been undertaken in the home, investigating bilingual children and their families directly, home literate practices in two or more languages have been found to be actively participated in prior to school, though these were often later found to be untapped by school communities (Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Drury, 2007; Gonzalez, 2005; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; McNaughton, 2001; Reyes, 2012; Thomson, 2002).

Parke *et al* (2002) noted that 'mainstream educators tend to assume that young bilingual children arrive at school with little experience of literacy' and that recently migrated families are often assumed, by teachers, to be 'non-literate' (206). Again, where studies have been undertaken, investigating the literate practices of bilingual families, a rich tapestry of literate practices that span heritage language, English and other known languages have been found (Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Drury, 2007; Gonzalez *et al*, 2006; Gearon *et al*, 2009; Gregory, 1996; Gregory, 2006; McNaughton, 2001; Reyes, 2012). For young, emergent bilingual children,

their home literate practices included input from parents, siblings and other relatives, notably grandparents, as well as significant interaction with community members (Gregory, 2006; Parke *et al*, 2002). Entry to Community Language Schools was noted to begin alongside entry to school for many bilingual children (Molyneux, 2009; Parke *et al*, 2002) and participation in these included weekly language interaction and instruction in the child's home or heritage language. Literacy was deliberately pursued in these contexts but was rarely known about in mainstream schools (Parke *et al*, 2002). Jones Diaz (2003) stated that only 24% of teacher respondents in her research had had any discussion with parents concerning their children's bilingual abilities or expertise. The general assumption noted by Parke *et al* (2002) – that the migrant families entering their schools were often 'non-literate' is added to in the findings of Doucet and Tudge (2007) who recorded that teachers had a 'pervasive assumption that minority parents are not as involved in their children's educational endeavours' (316) and were generally disinterested in their children's education (also Cairney & Munsie, 1992). However, Thomson (2002, 3) argues 'that the vast majority of parents... think that school is very important and try hard to help their children succeed'.

In the bilingual or multilingual home, the literate practices noted by researchers included:

- Bilingual parents teaching their children to speak their home language as well as English (Reyes, 2012)
- Parents were also seen to read the mail with and to their children, ringing and visiting relatives, attending parties, Community Language School attendance and using new technologies to access information and entertainment in multiple languages (Reyes, 2012)
- Reading with children included story books and religious books; singing an alphabet song; providing materials to draw or write with; storytelling; teaching the children to write their name. Scaffolding of these activities was acknowledged to enable the building of expertise for these children prior to school entry (McNaughton, 2001)

- Researchers noted that family histories were recounted, picture albums reviewed and newspapers read (in various languages) in the home setting (Gonzalez *et al*, 2006)
- Children were taught their 'ABCs and 123s', reading to children occurred from infancy, talking to their children as a means to prepare for upcoming events or change, also children and parents took part in school orientation programmes (Doucet & Tudge, 2007, 312)
- Importantly, a number of researchers noted the important role of play in language acquisition and literacy learning (alone, with siblings or parents) (Drury, 2007; Gearon *et al*, 2009; Gregory *et al*, 2006; Parke *et al*, 2002). Samia, a child observed by Drury (2007), was noted by her school teacher as being consistently silent in school, however, in the home, she showed her growing expertise in both her home language and English as she was observed interacting in 'school play' that she undertook with her brother. Samia re-enacted school activities with her younger sibling, taking on the role of teacher (or more expert other) as she explained in their home language, the instructions she had first been given in English.

This variety of activities across various languages (including English) observed in the homes of bilingual or multilingual families mirror many of the practices valued by mainstream educators, when conducted in English. However, these researchers found that the participating teachers did not notice or did not value the same practices in languages other than English. What teachers notice or value in new students' literate repertoires upon entry to their first year of schooling is vital to understanding the course of transition from home to school.

Teacher knowledge of home literate practices prior to school

As language and literacy begin in the home environment, prior to school (Young, 2003; also Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Drury, 2007; Gearon *et al*, 2009; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Gregory *et al*, 2006; McNaughton, 2001; Reyes, 2012; Young, 2003), teachers need to 'find, use and value' each child's prior-to-school, home literate practices in their classroom activity (Thomson, 2002, 8). In acknowledging children's home

practices, it has been found that children are able to negotiate known literacy skills and aspects of identity with greater agency in the classroom (Miller, 2010).

Compton-Lilly (2006) argues that identity is situated and must be formed in joint meaning making (also Vryan, Adler & Adler, 2003). Therefore, where meaningful links are made between home practice and classroom activity, school outcomes, social and academic, are seen to be improved (Compton-Lilly, 2006; Dickie, 2011; McNaughton, 2001). Intrinsic to this improvement is positive identity negotiation (Cummins, 1997).

However, where children's capital is less valued, according to Feiler (2005), the children are viewed in terms of deficit. Rejecting deficit views of child difference, as perceived in their unknown or unvalued home practices, Dickie (2011) argues that it is vital for teachers to know about children's home literate practices in order to acknowledge these and to build pedagogical practice around them (also Jones Diaz, 2003). Researchers investigating transition to school for emergent bilingual children found that Thomson's (2002) metaphor of the 'virtual schoolbag' which remains closed due to its contents not being valued, or indeed not known about, in the school context is discriminatory and often leads to reduced identity negotiation and lowered academic outcomes (Thomson, 2002; also Dickie, 2011; and using similar though different frameworks - Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Moll, 2005; Molyneux, 2009). Therefore, research shows that teacher knowledge of home practice is vital for smooth school transition and affects school outcomes in the longer term.

Thomson's (2002, 8) call is for teachers to 'find, use and value' the literate practices of all students and this is further emphasised by other calls for the relationship building between home and school (Broström, 2005; Dickie, 2011; Feiler, 2005; McNaughton, 2001), beginning with knowledge of prior-to-school home activity, both literacy based and linguistic. The most often recorded mode of building these relationships was through teacher home visits, with teachers taking the role of learner (Cairney & Munsie, 1992); identities and relationships, were seen to be co-constructed and negotiated (Feiler, 2005); parents and children being viewed as experts in their context (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005). The more

traditional, uni-directional home-school relationship showed ‘little evidence of children’s home literate practice penetrating the school curriculum’ (Feiler, 2005, 133). When this model was rejected, it was found to open up home practice and classroom activity to a more inclusive pedagogy. The invisible home practices of children (Drury, 2007) being taken up in the classroom, led to greater connections for the children between their prior-to-school, home practices and their new school activity and more positive identity co-construction (Compton-Lilly, 2006, 2009).

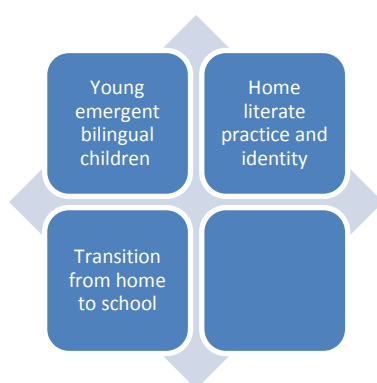
Transition from home to the first year of school

transition *n.* 1 a passing or change from one place, state, condition, etc., to another.

Pearsall & Trumble (2001, 1530)

The word transition is referred to as the process of change that is experienced when children (and their families) move from one setting to another. It includes the length of time it takes to make such a change, spanning the time between any pre-entry visit(s) and settling-in, to when the child is more fully established as a member of the new setting.

Broström (2005, 17)



Transition to school is the bridge from prior-to-school settings to school, undertaken by all children (Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, CEIEC, 2008; Centre for Community Child Health, CCCH, 2008; Yeo and Clarke, 2005). As noted by Broström (2005), transition includes preparation conducted in the home (and other prior to school

settings), orientation programmes run in the schools for new entrants and the initial period of school attendance (also ETC, 2011; Perry, Dockett, Whitton, Vickers, Johnston & Sidoti, 2006). Typically, research investigating young children, and more specifically children in transition to the first year of schooling, has been conducted utilising the children’s teachers (Christ & Wang, 2008; Hammond, 2009;

Thomson, 2002); their parents (Jones Diaz, 2003; McNaughton, 2001; Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005); or a combination of the two (Feiler, 2005; Guo, 2005; Lareau, 1987) as the contributing participants. The inclusion of children as participants has often been defined through researcher observational input (Gregory, 2006; Kenner *et al*, 2008). More recently, in a few studies, child participants have been invited to act as interviewed participants (Clark & Moss, 2011; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Potter & Briggs, 2003; Turner, 2009).

Transition is considered the 'major challenge children must face during their early childhood' (Seven, 2010, 347; also Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Potter & Briggs, 2003; Sanagavarapu, 2010; Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005) which includes the challenge of becoming competent both academically and socially in a new and diverse environment and being acknowledged as competent. It has been found that successful transition to school is a process that sets the tone for future school success and personal wellbeing (Dockett & Perry, 2001; Margetts, 2007; Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005; Seven, 2010; Yeo & Clarke, 2005). However, for emergent bilingual children there are also the dual challenges of bringing their home literate practices in more than one language to bear on a new situation; as well as the challenge of moving into a monolingual (English), learning environment (Drury, 2007; Molyneux, 2009).

Current research suggests that there has been a shift from focusing on the scholastic skill set deemed to be required for a successful transition (NSW Public Schools, 2007), or based on maturational determinants (Timperley, McNaughton, Howie & Robinson, 2003) to a focus on the influence of the social context on the child during transition (ETC, 2011). This new focus for researchers in examining transition to school has become the investigation of the links between 'the different social environments children experience' (Timperley, *et al*, 2003, 32) – noticing the effect of the establishment of deep and ongoing relationships among the children, their families, their teachers and the wider school community (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; CEIEC, 2008; Dockett & Perry, 2001; ETC, 2011; Perry, *et al*, 2007; Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005). Successful transition has been shown to be built on

positive identity negotiation within strong relationships among key stakeholders, leading to children who 'like school, look forward to going regularly, and show steady growth in academic and social skills' (CCCH, 2008, 1; also Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Timperley, *et al*, 2003). Research has also found, the converse to be true, that where there was a mismatch between home and school language, activities and values, there was evidence that children were found to be more likely to reject school culture (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; McNaughton, 2001; Yeo & Clarke, 2005).

Match and mismatch between cultures

The period of transition 'occurs over time, beginning well before children start school and extending to the point where children and families feel a sense of belonging at school and when educators recognise this sense of belonging' (ETC, 2011, 1). This includes the preparation that parents and other family members or carers conduct in the home and, for those children who attend, in other prior-to-school environments (e.g. preschool and other child care facilities) (Broström, 2005; ETC, 2011). Doucet and Tudge (2007) found that teachers' expectations were that a successful transition would follow successful preparation which included: teaching knowledge of numbers and letters, parents reading to their child from infancy, family talk about the upcoming event, orientation visits to the school and to meet the teacher. However, they also found that these teacher expectations were part of a hidden or less explicitly explained school culture (also Margetts, 2007).

The hidden school culture is revealed to be based in the mainstream or dominant, middle class laden values, interests and concerns of the school (Margetts, 2007). By 'not acknowledging this overarching goal, practitioners make invisible a process that clearly prioritizes the goals and values of one specific cultural group' (Doucet & Tudge, 2007, 313), thereby ignoring the strengths of other cultural groups. These studies also found that parents and children who did not appear to have grasped this hidden culture were deemed to be less school ready. Doucet and Tudge (2007) note, from their research that there were assumptions made about parents –

dividing them into two categories - parents who prepared their children for school success 'read [White and/or middle class parents]' and 'parents [read Black/dark skinned and/or poor parents]' (312) who did not and were thought to be less engaged in the schooling process. While the description is 'overly simplistic' it also captured the 'underlying assumptions regarding who is school ready (and who is not)' (Doucet & Tudge, 2007, 312). This stark, almost brazen, description is further alluded to in work by Margetts (2007), McNaughton (2001), and Smythe & Toohey (2009). Young (2003) concurs stating that teachers often 'blame' disadvantaged or culturally different children for their 'personal deficit' rather than taking into account the 'cultural differences' and giving credit for 'existing knowledge, skills and understandings' (5). In these studies social class and ethnicity are strongly linked to school success. Clear understandings of the hidden culture of schools are not revealed to the newest participants in schools, that is students new to the school nor their parents. So while these students are 'blamed' for their 'personal deficit', research has found that teachers and schools do little to undo this cycle. In the current study, relationships between home and school were investigated; families, children and teachers were interviewed in an attempt to open up the relationships that were built during the period of transition.

Teacher knowledge of bilingual children's home literate practices

In summary then, research has shown that children who experience environments and expectations in school similar to those experienced prior to school will find both the transition period and the schooling process a much smoother one (CCCH, 2008; Dockett & Perry, 2001). Gonzalez *et al* (2007) advocated that, in order to encourage the best possible outcomes for *all* children, teachers should build on each child's established academic and social skill sets or capital (also Compton-Lilly, 2009; Seven, 2010) rather than building upon only the capital of those children whose practices mirror the mainstream or dominant culture (Doucet & Tudge, 2007). This teacher-responsibility, is to build on and value each child's *known* home skill set (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Margetts, 2007; Moll, 2005; Young, 2003).

However, as indicated earlier, it has been found that, rather than forging relationships between home and school, and acknowledging the capital that each child brings to the classroom, children are treated differently. In a study by Young (2003) teachers were often found to blame disadvantaged or culturally different children for their personal deficit. Where there was a perceived misalignment between home and school practices, these children were often 'misjudged as unready and lacking in motivation, which in turn leads to a cycle of diminished expectations and lowered school success, marginalisation' (Christ & Wang, 2008, 178). Aligned with this statement, Doucet & Tudge (2007) found that there was a general 'pervasive assumption that minority parents are not as involved in their children's education endeavours' (316). Further, this assumption led teachers to view the children of minority parents, as less prepared for school and their parents as less than partners in the home-school partnership (Compton-Lilly, 2009).

Feiler (2005) noted that where the home-school relationship was uni-directional there was 'little evidence of children's home literacy practice penetrating the school curriculum' (133). In Australia, with more attention being given to the National Curriculum (released from 2012 and introduced in NSW from 2014), 'teacher performance and accountability pressures increasingly dominate policy and media campaigns, diversity and contextual complexity remain in the background.... The scale of diversity and its educational ramifications are silenced in public discourse' (Gearon *et al*, 2009, 8). In this situation (which is similar across the English speaking world), teachers, 'to a large extent do not see the true capacities of their bilingual students because the system is systematically unaware of them' (Parke *et al*, 2002, 197). In such an environment of policy and curriculum pressure on teachers they often maintain only a uni-directional relationship with parents and remain largely ignorant of children's home literate practices (Molyneux, 2009; Parke *et al*, 2002; Thomson, 2002).

Hammond (2009) found that in urban schools in Australia, up to 80-90% of the student population are bilingual. Despite growing policy and curriculum pressures on teachers, in this era of accountability (Pianta, 2007), there are 'strong grounds

for arguing that the needs of ESL students... are mainstream issues' (Hammond, 2009, 56).

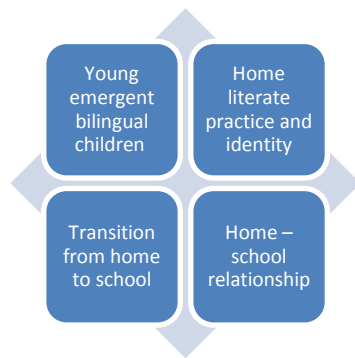
The critical nature of hearing bilingual children's voices

Transition, as a topic for research, has recently been gaining significance (Broström, 2005; Clark & Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2008; Phi Delta Kappan, 1994; Pianta & Cox, 1999) and there is an increasing concern to focus on hearing the voices of children making this transition (Clark & Moss, 2011; Drury, 2007; Hill, 1998; Kervin & Mantei, 2011; Potter & Briggs, 2003; Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005). Yeo and Clarke's (2005) study revolved around data collected from children as young as five years of age who 'were able to provide cogent and comprehensible accounts of how they felt about school' (p1). This study understood children to be 'experts on their own lives, with unique stories to tell' (p2) who could contribute to the understanding of both the transition process and the importance of key stakeholders' roles in the process. The children's voices were of paramount importance and, it was claimed, should be respected (also Cairney & Munsie, 1992) by being treated seriously – not only in this one study – but also in the transition process itself (also Hill *et al*, 1998).

Therefore, the aim of this project is to reveal the stories of three emergent bilingual children in their own voices, during this vital period of transition from home to school. Their stories highlight the experiences of transition to Kindergarten with particular reference to their prior-to-school, home literate practices and identity; and how these were negotiated, acknowledged and valued in the school setting. Part of the justification of my project design lies in the growing calls by researchers and other stakeholders for further studies which reveal the nature of transition to school for bilingual or emergent bilingual children (Jones Diaz, 2003; Katz & Redmond, 2009; Kenner *et al*, 2008; Lenters, 2005; Smythe & Toohey, 2009). As noted earlier in this chapter, with the linguistic diversity apparent across Australia and the significant and fast growing proportion of the school population that is bilingual, it is increasingly important that educators gain a greater understanding of the lives and experiences of children making this

transition from their home environment and language to their school environment and language.

Home – school relationship



When explaining the main elements of a successful bridging-to-school programme which Liu (2008) had led, she named relationship building with parents and children as being of the highest priority for ensuring smooth transition and positive scholastic outcomes in the early years and beyond. Smooth transition to school is predicated upon the

transitional activity of both home and school, or parents and teachers in conjunction with the children in their care; and the match between home and school cultures. Where there is a mismatch between the activity, expectations or culture of the two contexts, transition has been found to be more complex, less smooth (Christ & Wang, 2008; Doucet & Tudge, 2007; McNaughton, 2001); students have been seen to be misjudged, that is, judged according to class or ethnicity stereotypes (Doucet & Tudge, 2007), viewed in deficit (Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Parke *et al*, 2002). And so, vital to this period of change are the nature and quality of the relationships built between home and school (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Drury, 2007; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Kelly, Gregory, Williams, 2001; Smythe & Toohey, 2009).

The importance of relationship building between home and school is often seen as dependent on families becoming involved in school by participating in school activities (Feiler, 2005). These activities typically include visits to the school for orientation programmes and parent-teacher interviews but can also include participation in school based activities, for example - parent involvement groups (eg. P&C – Parents and Citizens) and school assistance (eg. book covering in the library, classroom reading programmes) (Cairney & Munsie, 1992).

Parents who do not become involved at this level can be judged by teachers to be less interested in their child's education (Feiler, 2005) and even a perceived 'hesitation' regarding becoming involved can be 'misinterpreted by teachers as lack of interest' (Doucet & Tudge, 2007, 316). However, this unhesitating involvement is often difficult for parents who are unfamiliar with either the school language or culture. Doucet and Tudge (2007) note '(a)pprehension about navigating an unfamiliar educational system (and) insecurity that something may be 'lost in translation'' (316) both add to the likelihood of parents feeling powerless in the new context and less likely to become involved. Feiler (2005) states that 'many teacher-parent programmes reflect the dominance of the school and there is a pervasive uni-directionality in the school/home links' (133; also Cairney & Munsie, 1992).

However, there is a growing body of research that calls for enhanced relationships between home and school. Many researchers have noted the importance of teachers becoming aware of home practices through the building of relationships (Dickie, 2011; Drury, 2007; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Gregory, 1996; Parke *et al*, 2002). Furthermore, Clarke and Zygmunt-Fillwalk's research (2008) called on teachers to initiate and nurture relationships with families of incoming students that have 'intensity'. These relationships needed to be more than group contact that is non-individualised and impersonal. Rather personal meetings, including home visits, were highly recommended (also Seven, 2010) as family involvement in schools was noted to be a key predictor of later academic success as well as positive identity co-construction (Vryan, Adler & Adler, 2003). These studies point to the importance of relationship building that involves teachers moving out of the school context and into the home context (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Dickie, 2011; Feiler, 2005; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Heath 1983; Hill *et al*, 1998; McNaughton, 2001; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; Parke *et al*, 2002).

Gonzalez *et al* found that the educational process was 'greatly enhanced when teachers learn about their students everyday lives' (2005, 6). In their study, home visits were undertaken by classroom teachers to encourage relationship building

that went beyond mass school-based events to more individually based activities. These were found to promote better understanding of the child's home environment (also Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Margetts, 2007; Seven, 2010; Young, 2003). During home visits, teachers took on the role of learner and parents took up the role of expert in their context (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Feiler, 2005; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005). With this alteration of more traditional role taking in home-school interactions, home visits became sites where experience was shared and expertise co-constructed (Feiler, 2005; McNaughton, 2001). Outcomes of this alteration included home-based practice and knowledge came to influence classroom practice (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Feiler, 2005); teachers became more aware of the complexity of the skills sets that children, particularly bilingual children, brought with them to school (Parke *et al*, 2002). Parke *et al* add that teachers who built their understanding of their students' language(s) and literacy capabilities, were 'able to take a more positive and knowledgeable approach to their bilingual pupils' (2002, 218) moving away from earlier deficit models used to understand such children and to frame classroom-based identity co-construction. For, they argue, bilingual children have the right to succeed, not only in their academic endeavours generally but also in their languages attainment.

Calls for relationship building between home and school place the onus of responsibility on the school and the teacher (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Feiler, 2005). In an era of accountability (Pianta *et al*, 2007), where efficiency discourses have been noted to be the 'strongest legitimising rationales in how public education is funded' (Lo Bianco, 2009, 114), recognition of the costs of globalisation and diversity in Australian schools fly in the face of the economic rationalist view of educational practice. However, as previously noted, there have been many calls for teachers to become more knowledgeable about home literate practices (Drury, 2007; Gregory *et al*, 2006; Parke *et al*, 2002; Smythe & Toohey, 2009) despite the costs involved. Gonzalez *et al* (2007) found that school readiness screening should include teachers visiting children in the children's homes to learn more about their home environments so that academic, social and linguistic skill sets might be understood and valued in the classroom. Feiler (2005) gives detailed accounts of

researchers and teachers working together with families of young students in their homes during the first year of schooling. This highlights new roles being taken up by teachers, as they become learners in the home (Gonzalez *et al*, 2005); and by parents, as they become viewed as experts in their home context (Cairney & Munsie, 1992). Out of this interaction, parents and teachers become partners in the educative process (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Feiler, 2005); and teachers can actively encourage home literate activities to enter the classroom (Feiler, 2005).

Key to understanding this change of emphasis in the home-school relationship is the notion of respect. Molyneux (2009) states that, in mainstream schools, there is often a failure to affirm the funds of knowledge or capital of bilingual students and there is a need for recognition and respect of the language resources these students bring to the classroom. As teachers become more knowledgeable about home literate practices these resources are more easily recognised. Cairney and Munsie (1992) note that where parents come to be viewed as partners in literacy, with teachers recognising children's and families' home literate practices and identities, and understanding parents as experts in their home context, there will also grow a respect based on the relationships built (also Christ & Wang, 2008; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005). This respect was deemed to be crucial to healthy home-school relationships where home resources became valued in the school context. Doucet and Tudge (2007), in line with interactionist research, state that this relationship building is dependent on all of the relevant players actively constructing schooling experiences together. This current study explores the relationships built between home and school in three narratives, highlighting the transitions of three young children and their relationships with their family and teacher.

Gaps in the Research

Within the literature related to this study several gaps were found. These gaps have been investigated and the current study takes its position from these calls to research action.

Arnold, *et al.* (2008) found that further research was needed in understanding the significance of the area of parent involvement in pre-literacy development during the prior to school years (also Cahill, 2003).

Molyneux (2009) stated that there is a dearth of research which gives place to the voices of the young children being studied (also CEIEC, 2008; Clark & Moss, 2011; Drury, 2007), advocating that children's and families' voices should find their place in research alongside those of the teachers' voices. Reyes (2012) adds that there is great need for further longitudinal studies of bilingual children's and families' everyday linguistic practices and learning experiences. While Cairney and Munsie (1992) call for further studies that move research into the home context (also Doucet & Tudge, 2007), particularly taking place in young children's homes around the transition to school (Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Drury, 2007; Feiler, 2005; Jones Diaz, 2003; Katz & Redmond, 2009; Parke *et al.*, 2002). Feiler (2005) calls for in depth case studies that look into interaction between home and school. Finally, Doucet and Tudge (2007) add that '(t)here is a glaring need for longitudinal studies that deal with the transition to school from the perspective of the home, rather than that of the school' (309). While the current study cannot claim to be longitudinal in the traditional understanding of the word, it does have a breadth that is uncommon in current research.

There was also a call for teachers to become more aware of home literate practices by building relationships with families (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2005; Heath, 1983; Hill *et al.*, 1998; Parke *et al.*, 2002). While the current study does not claim to have built relationships between teachers and families it opens windows on family practices in the home. This research, opening up the home lived experiences and literate practices of bilingual families gives significant stakeholders (including teachers and

other school based professionals, policy writers and families) the opportunity to experience snapshots of the literate activities and routines that families and communities undertake outside the school environment. It also highlights the negotiation and interactions between home and school; and child and teacher in the co-construction of each child's school identity. This also answers Doucet's and Tudge's (2007) call for further research, which is contextual and interactionist, investigating participants' everyday activities, and this particularly during a period of change.

These significant areas are taken up in this study, as it investigates, through ongoing contact and dialogue with the child participants and their families, how prior-to-school and school literacy experiences might connect to provide a smooth transition for bilingual children.

Conclusion

Smooth transition from home to school, vital for all children, is especially important for emergent bilingual children who have to bridge not only home to school differences but also negotiate language learning in their second or subsequent language as they negotiate their school identity. The growing diversity of students in schools in Australia (as well as many other English speaking regions around the world) raises questions 'of how schools will face the challenges of educating (an increasingly) diverse population, how communities will work to support families and schools working collaboratively, and how the teacher workforce will need to respond to student and family diversity' (Pianta & Cox, 1999, 1-2). While Pianta's and Cox's paper is now growing old, its plea remains current in calls for further research both in the Australian education system and more widely in the English speaking world, as evidenced previously.

As noted above, there has been limited research conducted in relation to young bilingual children making the transition to, and participating in, school (Jones Diaz, 2003; Lenters, 2005; Katz & Redmond, 2009; CEIEC, 2008; Sanagavarapu and Perry, 2005; Drury, 2007; Clark & Moss, 2011). Studies have highlighted the lack of

teacher knowledge of home literate practices (Compton-Lilly, 2009; Feiler, 2005) and this has been made more profound by the comparative silence in the research of the voices of young children generally and bilingual families and children more specifically. Also there is a lack of research data related to the nature of family involvement in bilingual children's development and literacy growth in the early years (Arnold *et al*, 2008; Cahill, 2003). This study begins to fill these gaps by revealing the small stories (Georgakopoulou, 2006) of three young bilingual children, during a period of transition as they negotiate the new school context and their own identities. In doing this, the stories of children, from a group traditionally recognised as vulnerable and often neglected in research, are revealed.

This literature review has also indicated the necessity for further research to be undertaken that highlights the voices of both the families and the children as they negotiate school and the classroom for the first time, recognising the importance of teacher awareness of, and school policy in this area.

The following chapter will outline the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this thesis which have been used to facilitate this particular investigation.

Chapter 3

Underpinning the stories: Theoretical and methodological supports

Underpinning the stories:

Theoretical and methodological supports

Introduction

This chapter describes the theoretical and methodological basis utilised to restory the lived experiences of three young emergent bilingual children as they made the transition from home to school, using Crotty's (1998) visualisation of the four main elements that inform research. Crotty (1998) determined that a qualitative researcher's epistemological, theoretical and methodological foundations, or *paradigm* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008), are drawn together to form the framework of beliefs which guides research action, the methods that can be employed within the selected methodology (Cresswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998). Figure 3.1, is an overview of this chapter's content, a visualisation of the theoretical and methodological basis for this study, based on Crotty's visualisation (1998, 4).

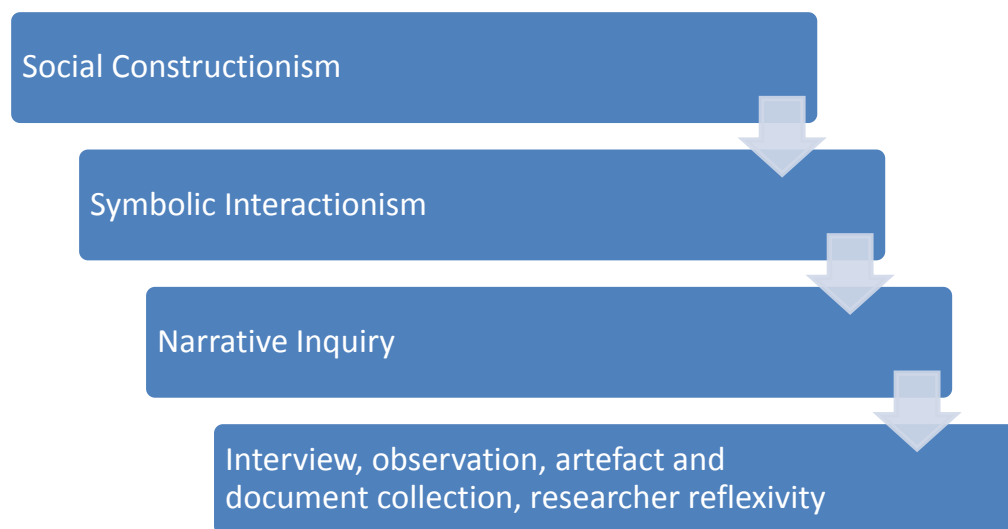


Figure 3.1 Visualisation of the framing of this study based on Crotty's visualisation

As outlined in Figure 3.1, the epistemological basis that I, as the researcher, align most closely with is that of the social constructionist. Constructionism recognises the nature of society as a human product, individuals being products of the social interaction they engage in (Cresswell, 2007; Denzin, 1989). Fitting within this broad

perspective is the theoretical perspective, symbolic interactionism. Crotty argues that 'the epistemology generally found embedded in symbolic interactionism is thoroughly constructionist in character' (1998, 4). This theoretical framework was formulated largely through the work of sociologists in the Chicago School who explored the life experiences of research participants to give a broader, richer view of their stories and contexts (Blumer, 1969; Chase, 2008; Heubner, 2012). In discussing the movement and growth of the Chicago School's sociological trends after the 1940s, Chase records that, while mainstream sociology still favoured more positivist methods, symbolic interactionists based their research on a 'mosaic' model producing studies that 'contributed to a larger collective research endeavour' (2008, 59). The notion of a 'mosaic' approach to qualitative research is taken up in this study as elements of approaches that do not claim interactionism are drawn together with interactionism to aid the investigation of the participants and their lived experiences.

The research design draws on a narrative inquiry methodology (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Reissman, 2008) to highlight the small stories (Bamberg, 2006, 2010; Georgakopoulou, 2006) of the study's participants. Narrative inquiry rests on the restorying of participants' lived experiences and aligns with one of Richardson's five narrative types – that of 'everyday life' narratives (1990). The terms 'restorying lived experience' and 'everyday life' point to the co-constructedness and the ordinariness of the stories being told in this type of research. These elements are research-worthy as it is the constructionist/ interactionist's view that understanding or interpreting the everyday (a social construct) will shed light on the phenomenon being studied and so inform future understanding and action. As Scott and Marshall note, narrative is now understood as a 'major trope for analysing and understanding social life' (2009, 500). Methods, the final element of Crotty's (1998) construct, stem from this methodology and, in this study, include interviews; observations; collection of visual artefacts and other documents; and researcher reflexivity.

The use of this four-tiered theoretical and methodological framework to explore the interactions of the individual child participants in both the family-setting and the school-setting, provides a rich foundation for data analysis. Symbolic interactionism, undergirded by social constructionism, and extended through the use of narrative inquiry provides a better understanding of the lived experiences of the participating children, moving through a period of transition. This study:

- ❖ Clears a space for the voices of young emergent bilingual children making the transition from home to school, using a narrative approach to explore home and school experiences and literate practices.
- ❖ Highlights the themes that occur within and across the collected stories which in turn reveal how the children's home literate practices have been recognised and negotiated during their first term of compulsory schooling, by the children themselves and through teacher practice and school policy.

The Literature Review conclusively showed that while some 30% of children, beginning school in Australia, are emergent bilingual or bilingual (NSW DEC, 2013b), there has been limited research conducted in relation to young bilingual children making the transition to, and participating in, school (CEIEC, 2008; Clark & Moss, 2011; Drury, 2007; Jones Diaz, 2003; Katz & Redmond, 2009; Lenters, 2005; Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005). Also there is a lack of research data related to the nature of family involvement in emergent bilingual or bilingual children's development and literacy growth in the early years (Arnold, *et al*, 2008; Cahill, 2003). This study begins to fill these gaps by revealing the small stories (Georgakopoulou, 2006) of three young emergent bilingual children, aged between four and five years, during a period of transition. In doing this, the stories of children, from a group traditionally recognised as vulnerable, are revealed.

In this chapter the epistemological underpinnings of the researcher and the theoretical framework of the study, as well as the research questions are discussed. Following this, the methodology is explored, the participants are introduced and the methods of data collection and analysis employed are outlined. Finally the study's ethical considerations and limitations are highlighted.

Social Constructionism and Interpretivism

Social constructionism has three main tenets: ontology is relative; epistemology is subjective and methodology is naturalistic (Cresswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). That is, what is understood as one's 'reality' is varied or multiple; the meaning required in order to construct one's reality is co-created, or socially constructed, through interaction; and so the methods of collecting data about participant realities are also multiple and must be conducted in the settings they naturally occur. Therefore, research based on a constructionist epistemology, focusses on the context of the interactions and looks to convey the historic and cultural aspects of participants' lived experience (O'Shea, 2008). Social constructionists also understand the importance of reflexively positioning themselves within the research activity and making clear their interpretive efforts. The intent of the research, as 'all meaningful reality is (understood to be) socially constructed' (Crotty, 1998, 9), is to 'make sense of the meanings others have about the world' (Cresswell, 2007, 21). This 'making sense of' others' realities, locates meaning in the experiences of the interacting individuals, and it is this that is the goal of constructionists (Denzin, 1989).

Social constructionism recognises society as a human product, actively and creatively produced as individuals engage with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998; Hunter, 2010). Co-construction of meaning is central to this view of what knowledge is and how we know it. This co-construction is always occurring, in and through every social interaction, in every context. Berger and Luckmann (1967) contend that within these multiple contexts or realities of any individual's lived experiences, the reality of 'everyday life' (35) is a shared reality, interpreted by individuals as they interact. It is 'subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world' (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, 33). This 'everyday' reality is what the individual denotes as normal or self-evident. It is this everyday reality which the interactionist recognises as demanding investigation and interpretation (Creswell, 2007).

Therefore, in this study, the period of transition to school is significant for research purposes as one reality, that found in the family home; meets another very different reality, that found in the school setting. Specifically, to study the child-participants' home and then school realities in a period of transition; and to investigate the personal significance of their socially constructed and culturally specific literacy knowledge; will be heavily influenced by this notion of social construction of experience. The aim of the study, then, is to focus on how the children (and the families) make sense of and negotiate their new school reality (Hill, 1997) through discussions in their lived contexts – the home and the school; and with the children's regular interlocutors – their families and teachers.

Within constructionist epistemology, there is a focus on the importance of researcher reflexivity. Effort must be given over to identifying particular bias and background so as to examine the impact of the researcher on participants, their stories and the research as a whole throughout the interaction process. This will also allow an understanding of the 'value the researcher's own contributions... interpretive research depends on the intersubjective creation of meaning and understanding' (Angen, 2000, 383). Bourdieu, Accardo & Ferguson (1999) adds that 'distortion is embedded in the very structure of the research relationship ... (this has) to be understood and mastered as part of a practice which (is) reflective' (p608).

In summary, social constructionism considers that human interaction is based solidly in relationship, viewing meaning-making as a co-creation of the participating interlocutors in context (Creswell, 2007; Hopkins, 2009). The focus, in this study, is placed on the meanings participants negotiate in their everyday lived experiences (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Riessman, 2008), how they act, interact and negotiate in their social contexts, firstly in their family setting and later, as they enter school for the first time, in the classroom environment. Therefore, using a constructionist epistemology, and following Crotty's visualisation (Figure 3.1), an interpretive theoretical perspective would open up the field and the collected data for rich qualitative investigation. This interpretive framework must consider how meaning

is based on 'what we know of and how we negotiate within the culturally informed relationships and experiences, the talk and text, of our everyday lives' (Angen, 2000, p384). Symbolic interactionism, an interpretive theoretical framework, is concerned with how meaning is created through ongoing interaction in relationship (Angen, 2000; Blumer, 1969; Crotty, 1998; Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003; Scott & Marshall, 2009) and this is core to this research project.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism, an interpretivist theory, is regarded as sociologically informed, with its roots in philosophy and social psychology (Fraser, 2011; Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003). It grew steadily throughout the 20th Century, stemming from the seminal work of George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), in the Chicago School.

Mead's work was heavily influenced by the school of philosophy known as pragmatism, by the work of Darwin and by behaviourism. Leaning on pragmatism, symbolic interactionism takes up the premises that an individual's reality depends on his or her own interpretation; and that things or objects are given meaning within their context (Charon, 2004). Crotty (1998) noted that pragmatism influenced Mead's subsequent work as it viewed the world as being something to be explored rather than to be 'subjected to radical criticism' (74) this notion, then, focuses on the shared nature of that world, its intersubjectivity and the nature of communication. Crotty claims that Mead was instrumental 'in stressing the need for always considering situations from the point of view of the actor' (1998, 75). From Darwin's work, Mead recognised the importance of investigation being conducted in naturalistic settings; he also understood the importance of language and human's ability to use language to reflect on reality and to actively respond to situations (Reynolds and Herman-Kinney, 2003). Thirdly, from behaviourism, Mead recognised that humans 'must be understood in terms of *what they do* rather than who they are' (Charon, 2004, 34, italics in original).

Drawing on these influences, the sociologists of the University of Chicago's School of Sociology (the Chicago School) formulated their major principle that 'individuals act on the basis of the meaning that things have for them' (Benzies & Allen, 2001, 541; also Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1992), in doing this they began a movement that stepped away from positivist research, popular and predominant at the time. Drawing on the work of Mead and Blumer, Musolf (2003) contended that society is constructed through the behaviour of humans, actively interacting and determining to 'make sense of their social and physical environments' (103; also Denzin, 1992). He also maintained that 'making sense' continues in the mind of the individual through thought, that is, that humans are active in shaping their own behaviour. Therefore, socialisation is a dynamic relationship, between and within 'agentic and reflective actors (Charmaz, 2011, 375); thereby self- and social- interaction are interwoven (Denzin, 1992).

When further considering the Benzies and Allen (2001) statement above – that 'individuals act on the basis of the meaning that *things* have for them', the word 'things' must also be investigated. This word relates to the *symbolic* aspect of *symbolic* interactionism. Musolf noted that 'humans learn the cultural meanings of symbols (or things) through the socialisation process' (2003, 104). Consensus 'over the meaning of symbols brings about communication, patterned behaviour, social order' (Musolf, 2003, 107). However, different groups or cultures may attribute different meanings to symbols and it is as different groups meet that negotiation or 'sense making' continues to take place.

This ongoing negotiation of meaning and identity, in context, is central to symbolic interactionism. Investigating the negotiation that took place as the participants made the transition to school; and the culture or social context of the home, and that of the school, are central to this study. The negotiation that the child participants enact with family members and school actors (teachers and students) is played out through the family's, child's and teacher's small stories restoried in this thesis.

The main tenets of symbolic interactionism

Blumer, in drawing together this framework, claimed that ‘symbolic interactionism is a down-to-earth approach to the scientific study of human group life and human contact’ (1969, 47). Blumer’s (1969, 2) work highlighted three core ideas or tenets of symbolic interactionism which reflect Mead’s foundations:

- i. *‘human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them’*

Mead defined this activity as being ‘minded activity’, that is, it is activity that involves reflection and interaction (Fraser, 2011; with self and others – Denzin, 1992) – it is ‘interpretive, reflexive and mediated’ (Musolf, 2003, 114). The ‘things’ include everything a human being notices in his world – objects, other humans, and institutions (including the family and educational institutions), situations, ideals and activities of others (Charmaz, 2011).

How the child participants behaved as they took up the identity of ‘student’ and negotiated their identity as ‘learner’ in the classroom, reflected their family’s preparation of them prior to school and was seen in the stories told by the family members prior to school and the teachers after Orientation and in their final interviews; also in the child participant’s stories of transition.

- ii. *‘meaning... arises out of the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows’*

Meanings are ‘creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact’ (Blumer, 1969, 5). Meaning and, therefore human behaviour, is shaped by the context of the activity (Musolf, 2003).

The child participants’ talk about their new identity as a school student is heavily influenced by their interaction with those significant to them in the process of transition. The final family interviews highlight the changes

that have occurred as well as the agentic nature of the children's and their parents' participation in this process of transition.

- iii. *'meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things he or she encounters'*

The individual makes meaning and negotiates meaning based on and in reaction to the situations that he encounters (Blumer, 1969; also Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2006; Charmaz, 2011; Charon, 2004; Denzin, 1992). Identity is constructed and reconstructed through this ongoing process of interpretation or meaning making. Denzin (1992, 26) notes that 'the central object to be negotiated in interaction is personal identity'. Through each interaction with the participating actors construction of meaning and identity is revealed. Identities are managed between the actors (Abercrombie *et al*, 2006). The actors are agentic, able to negotiate though influenced by the power relations implicit in the context (Scott & Marshall, 2009).

In using symbolic interactionism as a theoretical base, the aim of this study was to restory the lived experiences of three young emergent bilingual children as they negotiated their identities as learners during a period of change. This ongoing action of negotiation is significant to the child participants' small stories and the faithful restorying in this thesis is also useful for a wider audience of key stakeholders – families, teachers, teacher-educators, others interested in the progress of bilingual children, particularly at a time when around 30% of all students in NSW schools fit this broad descriptor (NSW DEC, 2013b). The meanings each child brings with them into the classroom environment as well as the ways they negotiate their identities is significant in how classrooms are organised and how pedagogy is formulated.

The symbol of symbolic interactionism

Charon (2004) describes the *symbols* of symbolic interactionism as being 'objects that are used to represent whatever people agree they shall represent.... (they are) used by the actor for representation and communication' (47-48). Symbols are

social, meaningful and significant (Charon, 2004) and are contextually based (Blumer, 1969). Actors attribute meaning to symbols as they interpret them through ongoing social interaction (Charmaz, 2011).

Symbols, then, are objects. Blumer (1969) outlines that objects can be classified into – physical objects (eg book); social objects (eg teacher); and abstract objects (eg ideas). Symbols are a subset of these objects (Charon, 2004). Within this schema, it is clear that language is symbolic (Althiede & Johnson, 2011). In the Kindergarten classroom for example, the sound of the bell stands for the beginning of the lunch break or the end of playtime; the interactive white board stands for a place where group work can take place or a useful tool for game playing, or simply fun; the word ‘teacher’ stands for one of the group of people who give instruction (or who hand out rewards or punishments; or who act in the place of a parent to very young children as they begin the schooling process).

The work of Pahl and Rowsell (2010) is concerned with artefactual literacies, they consider physical objects as symbols. In this framework, artefacts are the objects and memories of objects that are ‘an embodiment of a lived experience’ (1), symbolising relationships or events of significance, they tell stories. These artefacts are valued by or made by a meaning maker in context, through interaction with others or through self-talk. The stories told using these symbols, significant to the meaning maker, reveal aspects of the meaning maker’s identity. While Pahl and Rowsell do not claim to be adherents of symbolic interaction, their work is interactionist in nature and has been used within this study to highlight the significance of the symbols in an individual’s lived experience, revealing identity. Most particularly, the photos taken by the child participants to highlight their favourite activities prior to entering school are investigated. Also the artefacts (work samples) collected from the classrooms which indicate the progress of the child participants as they take continue to up literate practices during the first term of school. Hence, this study enriches the symbolic interactionist framework as it draws upon the work of Pahl and Rowsell (2010) by opening up the investigation of symbols to further scrutiny.

Finally, within the framework of symbolic interactionism, the actors are considered 'agentic, reflective' (Charmaz, 2011, 375) with the relationship between actors and society being dynamic. Society and social institutions are understood to be socially constructed rather than static structures (Charmaz, 2011; Hopkins, 2009; Hunter, 2010; Vryan, Adler & Adler, 2003). This is significant as often in research undertaken to investigate bilingual children, they are perceived as a single homogenous entity or described as silent or needing representation (Drury, 2007; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Gregory, 2006). The current study investigates the agentic nature of the participating children and their families, as they act to negotiate and contest early identity formation in the new school context (Riessman, 2008).

[Again, while Charmaz does not claim to be a symbolic interactionist, her work fits with the main tenets of interactionism, as outlined above.]

Criticism of symbolic interactionism

The inception of symbolic interactionism was as an oral tradition stemming from the unpublished work of George Herbert Mead. Posthumously, Mead's lectures and various manuscripts were drawn together by his students for publication. Heubner (2012) described this action, as being transformative and interpretive in nature – that is, that the works were 'not merely *made available* through publication, but were *constructed*' (134). Therefore there can, arguably, be more than one interpretation of Mead's original teaching – an ironic criticism certainly, however, a criticism none the less. This criticism however also highlights one of this theoretical approach's strengths – it is possible to incorporate other theories (as noted above) in order to open up investigation sites to deeper scrutiny and richer insight.

In addition to this, Benzies and Allen (2001) noted that the approach had been criticised for its lack of a clearly articulated, systematic base with no clear procedures or methods for enhancing research. This criticism came first from a noted interactionist from the Iowa School, Kuhn, who claimed that Symbolic Interactionism was not a method but rather a 'philosophical approach to direct

examination of the empirical social world' (Benzies & Allen, 2001, 546). Since Mead first espoused his philosophical approach, researchers have, in drawing together the main tenets of symbolic interactionism, begun to answer this criticism, notably Blumer (1969) and Reynolds and Herman-Kinney in their edited Handbook (2003; also Benzies & Allen, 2001; Charon, 2004; Huebner, 2012; Spyrou, 2011). Furthermore Crotty (1998), in his foundational text for social researchers, described how this theoretical framework fit with methodological activity.

Thirdly, symbolic interactionism was long criticised for its neglect of social institutions, with the exception of studies that systematically examined families (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003). This neglect was identified as a failing to focus adequate attention on social structure, rather focusing on individual interactions. However, 'interactionists have developed concepts that connect individual behaviour within micro and macro level societal structures' (Benzies & Allen, 2001, 546) and this is clearly shown in Reynolds & Herman-Kinney's treatment of institutions in their *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism* (2003). In this current study I have not only begun to apply the tenets of symbolic interactionism to the participants, but have also investigated the larger institutions that they are situated within – the familial and educational institution.

Symbolic interactionism has developed as a multifaceted theoretical framework and it is this framework that has been employed to inform this study. The outline of the general tenets of its philosophy, above, are now followed by a short discussion of the three areas that specifically relate to this study, namely an understanding of how symbolic interactionism views the child, and the two institutions that are investigated in this study – the family and the education system, in the guise of the Kindergarten classrooms that the child-participants enter as they begin school for the first time.

Symbolic interactionism and the child

Until the late 1960s children and childhood were largely neglected by symbolic interactionist studies and it was not until 1977 that Denzin noted that children are

social and cultural products (1977): ‘complex beings... continually confronted with competing and conflicting definitions that span cultural, historical, political, economic, social and scientific dimensions’ (22). Denzin continued ‘the child’s self-definition directly reflects the definitions of childhood he or she confronts on a daily basis, from conversations with peers, siblings, parents and teachers (1977, 23) – this ‘self-definition’, relating to identity, is malleable and dependent on interaction in context. Hence this study deliberately chose to interact with the child participants with their parents and other family members and later observations were made of these children in their school setting.

It was not until 1988 that Mandell, noting that there were few studies of children’s social worlds, recorded her research engaging in children’s own activities as an involved participant observer, allowing them to teach her during her data collection. Cahill notes that the outcomes were ‘well worth the considerable effort’ (2003, 860). In the last five decades, children have moved from being defined as ‘deficient versions of their elders who needed to develop, to be taught, socialised and, yes, tamed’ (Cahill, 2003, 589) to being understood as, different to their adult counterparts, but still agentic, social actors (Charmaz, 2011); as such their everyday social worlds have become valued in this field of research.

Mandell (1988) contended that researchers must suspend their judgments on children’s immaturities and focus on viewing them as ‘social members’ – taking young children seriously. She espoused that adult researchers ‘must engage in joint action with the children, thus creating mutual understanding’ (436). The term coined for this researcher role was the ‘least-adult’ role. This role taking was vital to achieving a close involvement as social objects were shared between adult and child, according to Mandell. Her involvement with her participants was essential to creating joint meaning, allowing the adult to gain an understanding of the children’s actions, their lived experience – it included play with children on their terms, in their context (day care centres), using their language and with them as directors of the activity. For Mandell, this activity highlighted how children’s social worlds were complex, rich and situated (also Hopkins, 2009; Hunter, 2010).

Taking up Mandell's (and others') research that sought to gain entry to the social worlds of children, Spyrou (2011) noted that there was still, some thirty years later, a 'need to move beyond claims of authenticity and account for the complexity behind children's voices by exploring their messy, multilayered and non-normative character' (151; also Greenfield, 2011). By critiquing others' work, Spyrou returns to his central argument that traditional methods of data collection would not be sufficient to enter the social worlds of children. His particular emphasis was on using visual methods to elicit richer data collection that reflected on and engaged the children's talk, in order to explore the children's own perceptions of identity.

Cahill (2003) argued that the neglect of children and childhood by researchers from a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, has largely been redressed in the last three decades, however he notes that much of this research has taken place in more densely populated sites for example in schools and day care centres. Far fewer studies have been conducted in 'family homes, neighbourhoods, and teacher-student encounters' (871) with the research carried out in these sites being focused on parent's or teacher's information about the child with children's voices being backgrounded. Such research has been deemed time consuming, difficult and complex. Spyrou (2011, 162) concludes:

representing children requires wisdom and insight on the part of the researcher(s) throughout the research process from design, data collection and analysis to reporting. No single method can guarantee successful representation in itself. Reflexive research however accepts the messiness, ambiguity, polyvocality, non-factuality and multi-layered nature of meaning in 'stories' that research produces. The quick and easy way is not necessarily the most ethical way; the ethical way necessitates time for reflection.

Hence this study aimed to answer some of Cahill's and Spyrou's calls by electing to interact directly with the child participants, to seek their opinions, their stories, their thoughts and reflections. It is a study that has sought to explore the lived experiences of these young children in their family context and during transition to

school with the voices of those children being brought to the fore. It wades into the 'messiness' of their lives, a time consuming undertaking, and incorporates visual methods and play strategies with more traditionally accepted methods, to open up the research spaces to allow these young voices to be heard (these methods will be examined later in this chapter and in the following chapter). This study is not neat or tidy, but meanders with the interests and actions of the primary participants – young emergent bilingual children.

Symbolic interactionism and the institution

One of the main and continuing criticisms of symbolic interactionism has been that it *focuses* 'on small-scale face-to-face interaction' (van Krieken, *et al.*, 2000, 653) neglecting the systematic investigation of social institutions that other research perspectives have studied (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2004). However, there has been an increase in research in this area, over the last four decades. In investigating institutions, interactionists tend to focus on individual agency within the institution. In addressing this criticism, the Reynolds & Herman-Kinney *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism* (2004) set aside one section to the consideration of how symbolic interactionists attend to the study of institutions. This ten chapter treatment, 'represents the first time that symbolic interactionists have collaborated to produce an analysis of all ten major social institutions' (2004, 435). These include what Reynolds and Herman-Kinney term – the familial institution and the educational institution.

In stepping beyond the individual to explore social structures the process of socialisation and agency are necessarily examined.

Family

The actual unity of family life has its existence not in any legal conception, nor any formal contract but in the interaction of its members.

Earnest W Burgess, 1926, 5 cited in Erickson, 2003, 511

Unlike the perceived neglect of the study of childhood, symbolic interactionism was quick to begin the study of families, with studies found as early as the 1920's based on Mead's tenets of interactionism (Blumer, 1969). Since the 1980's, family studies conducted have 'recognised that the complexity and diversity of the perspective enhances [the researchers'] ability to provide meaningful insights into current family life' (Erickson, 2003, 512).

The family unit is widely understood to be the main institution for socialisation. The family has been viewed as a unity, dynamic, living, based around the shared meanings emerging from interactions (Erickson, 2003). Critical to the study of families is the 'interplay between families and their surrounding context' (Erickson, 2003, 517). Erickson noted that 'families must be studied as living forms that are sensitive to (but not mere reflections of) their surrounding local, national and world communities' (532). This study includes a significant undertaking to reveal the lived experiences of children *in* their family settings. It deliberately includes family talk and interaction in an effort to open up the home lives of children from various cultural backgrounds during a period of transition, highlighting their lived experiences and literate practices.

In investigating families, researchers also undertake to explore the notion of meaning making and identity formation (Kinney, Brown Rosier & Harger, 2003). Identity, is understood to be actively negotiated through interaction with significant others (Blumer, 1969). This process of socialisation is a continuous negotiation of identity through which the individual comes to reflect on and influence those around it – and ultimately, human society (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1977).

In the current study, interaction within the family is vital to the investigation. Hearing the small stories of the family's lived experience in the lead up to the beginning of school. Literate practices instigated by the parents or siblings of the participating children are revealed. Observing the children, first in their family context, then in their school context – exploring how the children negotiated transition as well as their identity in these situated social environs. Reflecting on

change or conflict that arose out of the transition to school where interactions placed different social and cultural pressures on the children and, in some cases, the adults, is an important area of investigation.

How home literate practices were enacted by the family, observed by the researcher, and negotiated in the school setting is research worthy. Bourdieu (1990) coined the term, *habitus*, which he described as a set of 'dispositions' that become practice and are passed on to others through interaction. Scott and Marshall (2009, 300) define habitus as 'acquired dispositions of thought, behaviour and taste which ... constitute the link between social structures and social practice'. While Pahl and Rowsell (2010) state that family literate practices are a part of a family's habitus and these include 'routinized experiences, religious practices, rites of passage, parenting practices, cooking and sharing experiences' (7) as well as more closely related literacy activities that include the use of books, paper, pens/pencils, talking, listening as well as family inclusion of digital based literacies in their everyday practices. Pahl and Rowsell go on to examine how some students' home literate practices "fit' with schooling better than others' (8). This study also investigated the home/school match of literate practices and both the family and teacher understandings of what constitutes preparation for school.

Education

In undertaking to give an overview of how symbolic interactionism has been used to frame studies on the familial institution, Erickson (2003) highlighted Cooley's challenge of the idea of the family being the main tool for socialisation.

Socialisation was understood to take place wherever the inter-actors are significant to each other – therefore teachers, peers and neighbours could be included in this notion of socialisation actors. Thus the detailed investigation of children entering school for the first time is vital to an understanding of how their socialisation continues as these children negotiate meaning making and the construction of identity in the educational institution.

Symbolic interactionism espouses that meaning making is a social co-construct occurring in and through everyday activities (Kinney, Brown Rosier & Harger, 2003).

The question arising and pertinent to this study, is – how do individuals negotiate their identity and construct meaning as they transition to a new macro social structure, in this case, a school setting? The work of Bourdieu will be drawn on to facilitate this study's examination of the educational institution. Bourdieu considered himself a '*constructivist structuralist*' (Bourdieu, 1989) – by which he argued that social structures (including the educational institution) 'are capable of guiding and constraining' social practices (14) and therefore limiting individual agency (Jensen, 2011). Furthermore, Bourdieu argued that teachers, because of their position of power, construct understandings or images of their students based on the structures within which they meet (Bourdieu, 1989). This tension between the agency of the child and their parents and the power structures already apparent in the dominant culture, as found in the education system, is explored in Chapter 6.

While Bourdieu did not claim to be a symbolic interactionist, the editors of the *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism* (Reynolds and Herman Kinney, 2003) reference Bourdieu's work because of his interactionist foundations and his understanding or explanations of the term 'capital'. Bourdieu argued that social advantage or capital (educational, economic, social or linguistic) is gained or recognised through membership of and acceptance in the dominant culture (Marsh, 2006; van Krieken, *et al*, 2000); while a lack of adherence to the practices associated with the dominant culture continues to give rise to social inequality or disadvantage (Lareau and Horvat, 1999).

Therefore a key factor in the reproduction of the dominant culture, in any society, is the education system or 'pedagogic action' (Habibis & Walter, 2009; Marsh, 2006). Kennedy & Surman (2005) assert that where children's capital is not recognised within the education system (or indeed by the dominant culture) they are placed at a disadvantage. Educational success, then, is a product of the institution accepting or rejecting the cultural (or other) capital as it is recognised by the teacher and, secondly, as it is activated or negotiated by the student and their family members.

Lareau and Horvat (1999) consider that this negotiation is most effectively examined through investigating moments of inclusion or exclusion. In the current study, the families' preparation of their daughters for school, as established in their literate practices, were observed by the researcher in the home and then observed in the education setting.

Therefore, core to this study, was a determination to understand the children's and families' small stories (Bamberg, 2006) against the backdrop of the education system, during their transition to school. Acknowledging the power structures inherent in the teacher-student relationship was vital to understanding how the children negotiated the school setting, as they continued to construct their identities as emergent bilingual, literacy learners, students and members of their families. By investigating how power and identity are negotiated in a large institution, light is shed on how educational policy and teacher practice may serve to include or exclude these children who come from minority cultural and linguistic groups (Habibis & Walter, 2009; Jensen, 2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Marsh, 2006; Scott & Marshall, 2009). In this study of children who are perceived by their teachers to be part of a minority group, these children's stories of transition open windows onto the forming of identities and the negotiation of capital, through the transition process in the school setting (Bamberg, 2006).

From theory to methodology

For qualitative researchers, the focus of research is to take theory and harness it in order to 'open up' social settings to a deeper, richer view (Crotty, 1998); such research is characterised by rigour and trustworthiness (Angen, 2000). This study aimed to expose the lived experiences of the child participants through narrative inquiry, which was informed by symbolic interactionism. This inquiry opened windows onto the emergent bilingual children's literate activity in the home, prior to school, and then followed them into the school setting to gain a deeper understanding of transition and the classroom experience. To understand how teachers valued (or even noticed) the home literate practice of these children and

how the children negotiated their classroom or school identity as agentic participants, capable learners.

Analysis of home conversations and observations were triangulated with analysis of the classroom observations and teacher interviews to allow micro level investigation of this under-researched group against the backdrop of the macro-structure of the education system. The theoretical framing of the investigation leans heavily on symbolic interactionism and draws on tenets of Bourdieu's work on capital; including visual and play elements (Broström, 2005; Cahill, 2003; Gregory, 2006; Mandell, 1998; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Spyrou, 2011) and foregrounding the children's own voices.

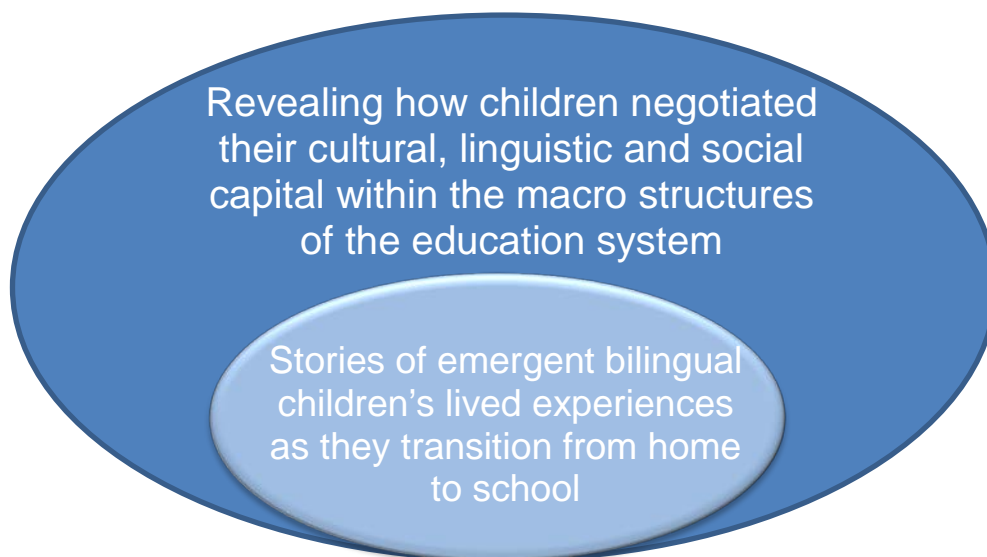


Figure 3.2 An embedded study: The negotiation of identity and capital in the home and school contexts

Figure 3.2 highlights the embedded nature of this study in which the children's (and families') small stories are revealed in the home setting and then embedded in the macro structure of the education system as revealed in the classroom observations and teacher interviews and, indeed, in the final family conversations. Taking the symbols of the children's everyday life, in the home and in the classroom, revealing the meaning making and identity negotiations, these are the aims of this study using a symbolic interactionist theoretical stance.

Narrative Perspective

One of the best ways to understand the actions of individuals is to be allowed to hear their personal stories as they themselves choose to narrate them.

(Stone & O'Shea, 2012, 2)

This research project is qualitative in nature, utilising a narrative methodology. This particular methodology was employed to draw together data collected from the child-participants' and their families' home dialogues, artefacts and classroom observations, as well as teacher interviews that together show change over time and between places. These data also highlight how each participant's home literate practices, revealed in the initial conversations are negotiated in the school setting. Narrative inquiry seeks to reveal stories which are fluid, altering and continuously being produced (Stone & O'Shea, 2012), showing belonging and the desire to belong (Reissman, 2008) – exposing the unfolding identities of the child-participants through the small stories (Bamberg, 2006, 2010) of their everyday lived experiences (Richardson, 1991) as they make the transition from home to school. These stories show sometimes conflicting, always complex aspects of the participants' stories (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008).

Interaction is at the core of narrative inquiry, particularly that which uses as its theoretical base, Symbolic Interactionism. Interaction between researcher and primary participants, in this case the participating children, is built around meetings that occurred with the participants in their family settings, through dialogue, play and observation; and, importantly, in conjunction with their families. During these meetings the researcher, participants, co-created narratives of their lived experiences. The interviews engaged in, are dialogues or conversations rather than a set of structured or semi-structured interviews with standardised questions. The researcher, through ongoing interaction with each participant, then restoried these lived experiences, finding chronology and sifting themes, checking given information during the ongoing interviews. This conversational style became a means of member checking as dialogue occurred, points were queried, language

and understanding were checked. Through protracted dialogue both researcher and participants checked and rechecked language used and explored meaning. This was particularly important as participants checked for the best selection of English words to use to describe their lived experience or ideas, asked for definitions of words or clarification of questions and discussed the use of vocabulary. Parents taught children new vocabulary and children asked parents for translations as needed. Participants and other family members asked for information about the researcher. This interview style, with the co-constructing of responses, and the way the data have been revealed in Chapter 5 as large chunked chronicles of unaltered dialogue, with the researcher clarifying responses, flies in the face of much of what is deemed interview 'best practice' (Creswell, 2007). However, it is precisely this method of restorying the small stories revealed that gives greater depth and richness to this data set.

Using a narrative approach, this project focuses on restorying the lived experiences of emergent bilingual children entering school for the first time. The aim was to understand each child's prior-to-school, home literacy experiences that they brought to, and negotiated in, the classroom as they began their school-based literacy learning; and the value that the children and their families placed on these. The researcher also explored how the children's prior literacy experiences were acknowledged, privileged or valued in the classroom, through classroom observations over an extended period and through teacher interviews. Finally, the researcher, children and families met to revisit the home conversations and classroom experiences and to draw together the many themes and ideas that had come to light during this extended period.

Narrative inquiry is built on description that reveals the deep, layered and multifaceted lives of the participants, the 'messiness' (Spyrou, 2011) of their lived experience. Without this there is no research, merely storytelling and therefore the transformative nature of the participants' stories may not be foregrounded. Riessman (2008, 10) states, "(c)onnecting biography and society becomes possible through the close analysis of stories" – this is the essence of narrative research.

Research Questions

The following research questions framed this study:

- ❖ *What are the lived experiences of the emergent bilingual child-participants as each makes the transition from home to school, with reference to their home literate practices and preparation for school?*

This question identified what the child-participants and their families, deemed necessary and appropriate preparation for beginning school, with particular interest in the family's literate practices, including literacies in more than one language. It explored which literate practices had been developed and how they were developed or encouraged in the home context. Through ongoing dialogue with the children and families, these individuals' stories have been built up over time to reveal the meanings that each family has placed on school readiness and literacy, prior to school.

- ❖ *How are the capital that each child brings to school and their identity negotiated in the Kindergarten classroom, with reference to family activity, teacher practice or school policy?*

This question identified what counts as literate practice in the school setting and highlights who makes this decision. It explored early school contact with the child-participants prior to school, the teacher's understanding of the child's home literate practices, the use of Best Start by the teacher as an ongoing assessment tool, and any other tools or policy documents that the teacher used as they assessed and scaffolded their students. In examining the structures utilised by the teacher and the teacher's own perceptions of the child's entry performance, further light has been shed on the stories of these children during the transition period.

Research Design

The research design of this qualitative study, outlined in Figure 3.3, highlights a number of methods including both unstructured and semi-structured interviews, observations and field notes. The timeline for data collection is shown in Figure 3.4.

In this study the interviews conducted with the child participants and their families became viewed as ‘conversations’ due to the unstructured nature of the interview in conjunction with a large play component and the researcher following the child participants’ lead in the movement and flow of the conversation. Also the adult component of these conversations was very much driven by the parents of the child participants and so the final presentation of each child’s story is composed of many small stories that reflect the background, ethnicity, interests and activities of each family as well as the individual experiences of transition and negotiation in the school setting. This will be further discussed in the section titled ‘Data Collection’.

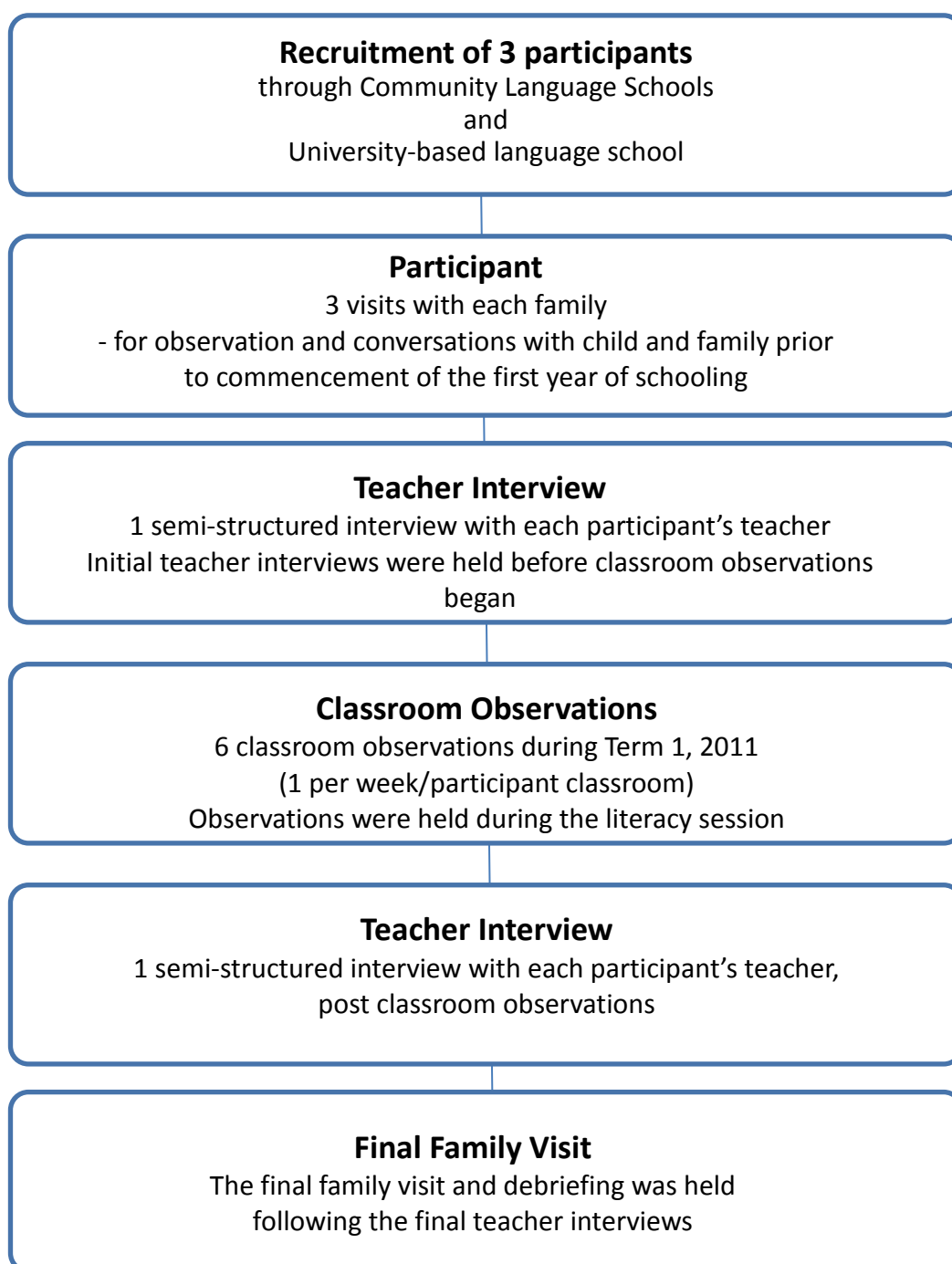


Figure 3.3 Research design

October 2010 – January 2011		February – April 2011		June – August 2011
Family Conversations	Teacher Interviews	Classroom Observations	Teacher Interviews	Final Family Conversations

Figure 3.4 Data Collection Timeline

Methods

Qualitative research design, bounded by human interaction, and in this study delimited by the theoretical underpinnings outlined earlier in this chapter, opens up areas of inquiry as it develops. The research project's final parameters are unknowable beforehand but, as each stage unfolds, the research gains depth and significance through the interactions of researcher and participant; participant and their sphere of outside interaction. Turner claims that "(r)esearch is a systematic investigation that aims to find answers to problems" (2009, 61) and that *qualitative* research finds significance by virtue of its role in exploring areas that "seek to understand rather than quantify" (Turner, 2009, 61). In this study, it is the very qualitative nature of the study that gives it significance. Cresswell (2007, 37-39) asserts that all qualitative research has a number of aspects that are unique to this mode of research which are inter-woven and add to the value and complexity of the findings, these aspects include:

- Natural setting – in qualitative research data are collected from participants, in context, adding to the authenticity of the collected data. In this study data were collected from the participants' homes and in the children's classrooms through 'face-to-face interaction over time' (Cresswell, 2007, 37);
- Researcher as a key instrument – in this study the researcher developed the research instruments, structuring the semi-structured interviews with teachers and developing the direction of flow of conversation with child-participants and their family members as dialogue progressed.
- Multiple sources of data – data were gathered from family dialogues or conversations and observations, teacher interviews, classroom observations and artefact collection from both home and classroom. This data were then reviewed, organised, coded and thematised.
- Participant's meanings – with narrative inquiry, a particular emphasis is placed on co-creating meaning with the participants and understanding the researcher's own role in the process of data analysis, through researcher reflexivity.

- Emergent design – in qualitative research the design and process of data analysis is emergent. The focus of such research is to explore the lived experiences of participants, highlighting the focal issues that come to light.
- Theoretical framework – using Symbolic Interactionism as the theoretical framework has allowed the researcher to focus particular attention on the child-participants' stories and lived experiences, highlighting issues related to how they negotiated their identities in the new school context.
- Holistic account – the aim of the qualitative researcher is to identify the multi-layered, complexity of the research area (Spyrou, 2011). In this case, to show the multiple dimensional factors that make up the child-participants' lived experience as they transition from home to school.

Who are the participants?

The primary participants in this study are three emergent bilingual children and their families. The children made the transition from prior-to-school settings (primarily their home and family settings) into the first year of schooling in late January 2011. These children, all girls, enrolled in Kindergarten in three Department of Education and Training (DET) schools in New South Wales (NSW).

The primary participants' classroom teachers were also interviewed during the first year of school. For the purposes of this study, the three teachers will be referred to as co-participants. This study is a narrative, restorying the lived experiences of the children and their families. These narratives are the stories of children – and could be described as 'family narratives'. In this case the data collected from the teachers is supporting data rather than primary data, hence the term 'co-participant'. These teachers participated in order to assist the creation of a richer tapestry of material that highlights the child's lived experiences of transition (Riessman, 2008).

How the participants were identified and approached

Participants were identified and approached only after successful application was made for ethical approval from the University of Wollongong Ethics Committee

(HE10/313) and the NSW Department of Education and Training (SERAP Number 2019211) (see Appendices E and F respectively).

The Association of Illawarra Community Language Schools (AICLS): The families of two of the child participants were initially identified through community language schools by the Principals of those schools, who approached families who had children starting school in January 2011.

Community Language Schools support and “promote heritage language maintenance in NSW, Australia” (AICLS, home page, nd). The families were approached by the Principal of the language school they were associated with and asked if they would like to participate in the study. The Principal had a participant information sheet to share with the families which included information about the number and location of family meetings as well as an explanation of the research activity that would take place in the school setting. As each family decided to participate and conveyed this decision to the Principal, the Principal then contacted the researcher and introduced that family. Initial contact between the researcher and the family was then made via email or telephone by the researcher.

The family of the third child-participant was contacted after a tutor from an English College heard of the study and discussed the study with one of her students. This family was interested in the study and made contact with me, wanting to participate. During the initial contact this family read the Participant Information Sheet and formally agreed to participate.

When the primary participants were enrolled in school the researcher then approached each school, first seeking permission from the Principals and then, after approval was given, approaching the teachers and inviting each one to become a co-participant in the study. The teachers were asked for permission for the researcher to come into their classroom for a total of six observation periods during Term 1, 2011. They were also asked to participate in two semi-structured interviews, one prior to the first observation period and one following that period.

As gender was not a focus of this enquiry there was no issue regarding all the children being female.

The following is a summary of each of the primary participants (the children) and their families and teachers.

Primary Participants: The children and their families

Child's name	Family Members living at home	Country of origin and languages spoken	Age in January 2011	Family's arrival in Australia	Parents' employment/ level of education	Interview Dates
Abhi	Mother Father Sister (2 yrs)	India - Malayalam English Hindi	4 years 8 months	2009	– Home Duties – Agricultural Economist - Specialist Doctor	30 November 2010 7 December 2011 17 December 2011 22 December 2011 8 August 2011
Raabia	Mother Father Sister (1.5 yrs)	Iraq - Arabic English	5 years 5 months	2009	- Home Duties - Engineer - PhD Student - Engineering	13 January 2011 20 January 2011 26 January 2011 13 August 2011
Lappi	Mother Father Brother (10 yrs) Sister (8 yrs) Sister (7 yrs) Brother (born 25 Jan 2011) Two elderly grandmothers	Cook Islands - Pukapuka English	5 years 2 months	1998	- Home Duties - Security Guard	21 December 2010 17 January 2011 24 January 2011 18 November 2011

Table 3.1 Primary participants and their families

Co-participants: The teachers

Child	Teacher’s name School’s name	Years teaching	Years teaching Kindergarten (incl. 2011)	No. in class	Size of school / % LBOTE*	Socio economic breakdown in school*			
Abhi	Ms Chapman Sunny Hills Public School	6	4	20	188 21%	Bottom quarter	Middle quarters		Top quarter
						3%	10%	14%	74%
Raabia	Mrs Cooper Fern Wood Public School	20	15	20	413 27%	Bottom quarter	Middle quarters		Top quarter
						9%	60%	16%	15%
Lappi	Mrs Fuller Downtown Public School	17	10+	18	237 65%	Bottom quarter	Middle quarters		Top quarter
						1%	57%	33%	9%
					* Taken from 2011 data	* Taken from parent information for 2009 data (not all 2010 or 2011 data available).			

Table 3.2 An introduction to the co-participants and the participating schools

* Statistics: taken from My School website, 20 August 2013 (<http://www.myschool.edu.au/>)

Note: None of the teachers had any ESL training

Data Collection

Data collection within narrative methodology is based necessarily on two criteria – prolonged engagement and persistent observation, as there is no narrative without deep engagement with participants (Riessman, 2008). This study has made use of conversational interviews with the children and their family members and semi-structured interviews with teachers, researcher reflections and artefact collection, as well as classroom observation over an extended period in order to build deep and rich relationships with primary participants, their families and teachers and to create a strong picture of the child, the family and the classroom settings.

Interviews

The interview, an essential data collection strategy for narrative inquiry, has been moulded to fit the needs of this study. The interviews conducted were of two styles. Those undertaken with the child participants and their families were unstructured and came to be viewed as conversations with the child and any family members present. These family conversations were fluid and included talk, artefacts and activity largely initiated and directed by the children or their parents. The children's voices are foregrounded and there is substantial input from the parents as well as other family members. Secondly, the interviews conducted with the children's teachers were semi-structured, with a standardised interview plan, however this plan was malleable and open to teacher interpretation and leading.

The child and family

Unstructured interviews with the child-participants and their families, were conducted in the form of ongoing discussions or conversations (Cresswell, 2007) in the family home (see Table 3.3 and Appendix A). These family conversations were recorded (using an iPod or micro cassette tape recorder) and later transcribed. The researcher made additional reflections following each meeting. Recording of information was contingent on the setting for each discussion and the child participant's ongoing agreement to have the interviews recorded; as well as the parent's written agreement to have sessions recorded (Appendix B).

Child's name	Family Members who participated in the interviews	Interview Dates
Abhi	Mother Father Sister (2 yrs)	30 November 2010 7 December 2011 17 December 2011 22 December 2011 8 August 2011
Raabia	Mother Father Sister (1.5 yrs)	13 January 2011 20 January 2011 26 January 2011 13 August 2011
Lappi	Mother Brother (10 yrs) Sister (8 yrs) Sister (7 yrs) (Two elderly relatives)	21 December 2010 17 January 2011 24 January 2011 18 November 2011

Table 3.3 Family meeting participants and meeting dates

Due to the age of the primary participants, relationship building took place between the researcher and all attendant family members, not simply the child participant. Families were visited three times prior to the beginning of school and once following the final teacher interview. These meetings were of forty to ninety minutes duration.

As the researcher, I carefully sought an approach to adopt in the family meetings. Talking with young children meaningfully, and with clarity, is a vital step in developing and building interviews that grow into a deep, rich description of a child's lived experience, and doing the same with young emergent bilingual children has an added, linguistic, layer of difficulty attendant upon it.

In 1988, Mandell moved her research with children away from more traditional models of researcher as detached observer to a model of 'complete involvement' (435). However, Spyrou (2011) noted that there was still, some thirty years later, a 'need to move beyond claims of authenticity and account for the complexity behind children's voices by exploring their messy, multilayered and non-normative character' (151; also Greenfield, 2011). By critiquing others' work, Spyrou returns

to his central argument that traditional methods of data collection are not sufficient to enter the social worlds of children. His particular emphasis was on using visual methods in tandem with other methods (including using familiar technologies) to elicit richer data that reflected on and engaged the children's talk, noting the importance of contending with children's silences as well. Spyrou (2011) acknowledges that such research is time-consuming and that 'quick' data collection is anathema to this area of research. In the current study, I have sought to enter multilayered lives of the young child-participants by participating fully in the activity of the children's lives in their homes as they have elected to reveal them. The children introduced activities around which our talk occurred – these included reading, ballet dancing, playing games on interactive TV game consoles, board games, singing with DVDs of nursery rhymes, playing card games, drawing and colouring in, writing, completing jigsaw puzzles, viewing school uniforms, letters, photo albums, eating morning or afternoon tea, sharing photos (of the participants and their families), playing with dolls and other toys, discussing fashion, scooting and gardening.

In this study I have also recontextualised Chambers "Tell Me" approach (1996) in order to assist and encourage the child-participants to speak clearly about their prior-to-school and transition experiences especially in the area of literacy learning. In his book, Chambers (1996) outlines an approach to asking questions that is designed to take classroom 'booktalk' beyond the obvious statements readers often make about books, to reach "thoughtful interpretations and develop understanding, we need to discover what it was that caused us to think, feel, notice, remember, reason" (50). Using this as an entry point, I took Chambers' approach to enhance my conversations with these three young participants. Chambers has a number of guidelines – no closed questions, no 'why' questions, questions should approach the hearer as genuine requests for information – querying the hearer's enthusiasms, their puzzles and the connections they have made with the book being discussed and to other aspects of their lived experience. I undertook to use this style to ask the child participants about their lives, their interests and activities, their friends and family, and their expectations about

school. However, with the children's youth and language needs taken into consideration one of the outcomes was that many closed questions were in fact asked in addition to initial open questions or during shared activities, these were a means of checking meaning or to encourage answers particularly in earlier meetings (a schedule for the family conversations can be found in Appendix A). In addition, to aid conversation with the child participants artefacts including photos taken by the children and their families were also used to prompt conversation. The collection and use of artefacts is discussed further in Chapter 4 and a collage of sampled collected artefacts can be viewed in Appendix H.

While all the children had times of silence, all showed that they felt comfortable during our meetings by their keenness to participate. This was evidenced through their agreement to have me continue to visit their homes; by the way the children prepared for my visits, having toys or activities to ready to show and share; and by the way the children waited for me to arrive, often finding some vantage point to see my arrival.

The family meetings were also times to ask questions of the parents (and in some cases the siblings) of the child participants. In order to cross from talk with the children to talk with the parents I developed a method of 'sliding between' the two conversation arenas. Talking and playing with the young children and then sliding back into talk with the adult participants. This occurred as the children came and went in the conversation; it had a physical side to it, in that I often physically moved from the floor where I played with the child to a comfortable chair where a parent was sitting – and back again – as the child determined. This allowed for the children to rest after periods of talk and allowed the adults to watch the interaction between me and their child. At times all those present continued a joint conversation. This fluidity added to the naturalness of the conversation while also adding further complication to the data analysis.

This interview style allowed for all participating (researcher and participants) to take time to consider answers or stories told, to return to previous conversation

topics to clarify or for clarification. It added to the interactive nature of the conversation and removed it a little further from a traditional interview style.

The final family meeting was held as a debriefing session, for final member checking and discussion and reflection on the process and activity of transition to school. These conversations took place after the final teacher interview and so were necessarily staggered. They were further staggered due to two of the families taking extended trips to visit relatives in their country of origin. While this altered some aspects of the reflective process it also highlighted certain aspects of the children's stories, the trans-national aspect of their lives, living between and across cultures and languages.

The teacher

Child	Teacher's name School's name	Interview Dates
Abhi	Ms Chapman Sunny Hills Public School	24 February 2011 15 August 2011
Raabia	Mrs Cooper Fern Wood Public School	28 February 2011 6 June 2011
Lappi	Mrs Fuller Downtown Public School	7 March 2011 22 June 2011

Table 3.4 Teacher interviews and meeting dates

In this study the teachers of the child participants were each interviewed twice (once before and once after the classroom observations) for around 30 minutes. A semi-structured interview style was employed. Stone and O'Shea (2012) postulate that one of the strengths of this form of interview is 'that it is the interviewee, rather than the interviewer, who ultimately determines the direction of the conversation' (3). Landridge (2004) adds that while using a standard question set the interviewee is able to answer at length and include areas that are of importance or interest to them, thus opening the data set to greater depth of insight.

In the week before schools commenced for the academic year, the researcher contacted the three schools that the child participants were to attend, in order to gain the Principal's tacit approval for the participating child's teacher to be invited to participate in the study (Appendix B). This proved a somewhat lengthy process as the schools had not finalised class numbers. In Lappi's case, her family had not enrolled her in the year prior to commencement. While Lappi's three older siblings already attended Downtown Public School, Lappi's parents did not enrol her until after school began. This was partly because Lappi's father was away at the end of the school year and the family's fifth child was born just three days before school commenced; and partly because Lappi's mother felt that this was not necessary because "they know that she is coming" (FI: 24 January 2011).

These setbacks resulted in the teacher interviews occurring later than had been planned in the initial project plan, however each teacher interview occurred within a week of the child beginning school. Each teacher interview was a short, semi-structured interview (no more than 30 minutes) (Appendix C). These interviews were conducted in order to gather insights into the teacher's professional history and teaching practices, how the teacher included policy document guidelines in their programming and how they perceived that they scaffold or support bilingual children in their classroom practice. Classroom observations followed the initial interview.

A second short interview was then held with each teacher after both the classroom observations and the Best Start assessments were complete. These were conducted to gain the teacher's perceptions of the particular child participant's capital regarding the child's prior-to-school home literate practices and their understanding of the particular child's transition to school. These interviews were held soon after the final observation with the exception of Abhi's teacher who was ill for several months at the end of the observation period. The interview with Ms Chapman was held upon her return to teaching at the end of Term 2. Following these second and final teacher interviews the final family meeting took place.

Non participant classroom observations

Child	Teacher's name School's name	Classroom Observation Schedule
Abhi	Ms Chapman Sunny Hills Public School	25 February 2011 4 March 2011 11 March 2011 18 March 2011 25 March 2011 1 April 2011
Raabia	Mrs Cooper Fern Wood Public School	27 January 2011 – meeting with Asst. Principal 9 February 2011 16 February 2011 23 February 2011 2 March 2011 30 March 2011 6 April 2011
Lappi	Mrs Fuller Downtown Public School	31 January 2011 – meeting with Principal 28 February 2011 7 March 2011 14 March 2011 21 March 2011 28 March 2011 4 April 2011 2 May 2011

Table 3.5 Classroom observation schedule

Classroom observations occurring during Term 1, 2011 were critical to develop an understanding of each child's transition to school and classroom literate practices. The classroom observations (and teacher interviews) allowed the researcher to better understand the family and children's descriptions of their classroom experiences (in their final interview) and with the collected documents revealed more about the teacher's classroom practice.

The classroom observations were undertaken as a non-participant observer taking field notes from an inconspicuous point in the classroom. Six lesson observations were conducted in each classroom during the literacy block between 9 and 11am.

In this research project an observational protocol was employed, based on that used by Kervin (2004). This protocol included space for information related to description of the key actors (child participant, the teacher and other students) and setting as well as description of classroom activities undertaken during the literacy block. There was also place for researcher reflections, queries and reactions (Cresswell, 2007; Kervin, 2004). There were a number of challenges to careful observation in the classroom setting which included the number of young children and the noise attendant upon their activity; the space between the researcher and the child participant; the teacher's inclusion or exclusion of the researcher; the students' ability to ignore the researcher. On most occasions these issues were short lived and the students and teachers soon forgot my presence, however space was an ongoing, intermittent issue depending on the activity undertaken in the classroom.

Visual Artefacts

Visual artefacts were noted or collected in each setting. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) assert that artefacts are a means of opening up social contexts to closer inspection, enriching the depth of other collected data in research. They argue that artefacts have physical features and embody identities and experiences, they are symbols of meaning. The use of artefacts in this research project is examined in detail in the following chapter.

Artefacts collected in this project include:

- Photos taken by the child-participants and their parents that highlighted their favourite possessions or activities
- Photos and photocopies of school work or classroom venues
- Samples of the children's classroom work

- Field notes and researcher journal detailing research reflections and observations will also give a freshness and accuracy to the data collected

These collected artefacts are essential background to understanding each child's context and will be further discussed in Chapter 4. It is against the background of these documents that the stories of the children's transition to school will be restoried.

Reflections

Following family meetings, interviews with the teachers, and classroom observations, I reflected on the environment, ideas raised by those participating, artefacts shown at interview, stories told, activities explained, teacher reflections, classroom activity; and feelings evoked as the researcher participating in the activity. These reflections outline and explore questions that have arisen during the interviews and observations. These include questions about process, cultural issues raised, relationships between the children and their family members and the children and their teachers and fellow students. There was also an element of consideration of how the teacher's classroom practice reflects their responses in the interviews; and how policy undergirds or undermines classroom practice and family expectations.

Researcher reflections hold a particular place in narrative inquiry as they aid in building the picture that has begun to be created through the interaction of participant and researcher and through observation of interaction between participants. These reflections also act as additional reflexive material in any qualitative study. Cresswell (2007) notes that all writing is 'positioned' (179) and reflections made following interviews or observations are complex annals 'of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class and personal politics that we bring to research' (Cresswell, 2007, 179). Crotty pointed to the necessity for researcher's taking a symbolic interactionist stance to be 'always considering situations from the point of view of the actor' (1998, 75) and this necessarily entails careful reflection which includes reflexivity in order to stand aside from one's own entrapments so as to view as Crotty exhorts.

Data analysis

As discussed earlier in this chapter, in order to evoke the lived experiences of emergent bilingual children using narrative inquiry, this study is informed by a symbolic interactionist framework (van Krieken, *et al*, 2000). Symbolic interactionism views all interaction as social, where meaning is co-created by participating actors. The influence of Bourdieu's work allows for analysis of collected data to be viewed in terms of how the participants negotiate the macro educational setting, for the first time. Further the incorporation of artefactual evidence, using Pahl and Rowsell's work (2010), ties in with the understanding of the symbolic nature of interaction. This twin approach allows data to be analysed on both a micro and macro level. There will be a further, more detailed explanation of the lenses used in data analysis in this investigation in the following chapter. This section will simply highlight the methods used to analyse the data collected.

Interview data for each participant has been analysed (after transcription) using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method of qualitative analysis (Compton-Lilly, 2009). Data was read thoroughly to gain an overall picture. Data relating to each participant's lived experience during transition to school were then coded; emerging categories and key words noted. Emerging themes within and across the participants' data were recorded. These gave rise to local theory (Quinn, 2004), the limits of which were determined and further explored; once this 'analytic framework forms a systematic substantive theory' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p113) the results were ready for thesis preparation. The data management software, NVivo 8, was used as an additional tool to assist in the organisation of the interview material. Data were analysed to find both the chronology within the stories and the themes within and across the participants' data (Compton-Lilly, 2009). Triangulation of field notes (from observations and interviews), coded transcripts, researcher's journal, reflections and document analysis allowed thicker and richer description of the lives to be restored (Appendix D).

In this project, traditionally understood member checking was not possible as the primary participants in this project are so young. However, there was still the opportunity for the researcher to take each conversation with the participant (and their families), and reflect on the data collected earlier, checking verbally and with further questions asked to verify the accuracy of the researcher's understanding.

Limitations of the Inquiry

Sample size

With only three primary participants, the outcomes of this study will not be generalisable. Additionally, more time was spent in relationship building to overcome possible power issues (see Section 10.4) in each interaction. Relational depth and honesty developed a richer base of core data (Angen, 2000) increasing the trustworthiness of the study as well as improving the value of the local theory (Clark & Moss, 2011; Drury, 2007; O'Shea, 2008; Quinn, 2004).

Primary participant age

It is only in recent decades that childhood or children have been deemed 'research worthy' (Cahill, 2003; Denzin, 2003) however, there is now a growing call for deep investigation of children as social actors. For some, interviewing children continues to appear frivolous or time-wasting, however there have been calls in recent literature for children's voices to be heard more readily in research literature (Cahill, 2003; CEIEC, 2008; Clark & Moss, 2011; Drury, 2007; Feiler, 2005; Jones Diaz, 2007; Parke *et al*, 2002; Reyes, 2012; van Krieken, 2010).

In this research project not only was the age of the primary participant taken into careful consideration but also the language barriers were considered as the project was established and conducted.

The language knowledge of primary participants and their families

The issue of depth of language understanding of both the primary participants (the children) and their families had the potential to present difficulties during data

collection and effort and care had to be taken to overcome this limitation. While not requested, the researcher was prepared to have Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms translated (or to offer to find translators for meetings) for any families who indicated that they could not understand the written information given or who wished to discuss this verbally (Appendix B). This was not requested by any of the participating families.

The researcher had to listen carefully, rephrase questions and check for understanding frequently during interviews. The habit of careful checking of answers and participant understanding of questions asked, continued throughout all interviews. This led to a form of member checking that was instantaneous and ongoing.

Parents were also enlisted (by the researcher and the children) to assist with ensuring that questions for children were well scaffolded and clearly understood – this included parents translating or explaining some questions or individual words; it also involved a combination of parent and researcher working together at times to rephrase questions that were not initially understood by the child participants. In one family, the mother was heavily pregnant and overwhelmed with the heat during the final prior-to-school interview, as there were older siblings present, these children took on the role, previously held by the parent, as scaffolders. The two older girls assisted in rephrasing questions and, at times, offered further information.

Finally, I personally transcribed all family conversations after each was completed to ameliorate issues related to understanding accent. Using the memory of what passed in each interview to aid transcription.

Impact of the researcher on home and school activity

The issue of the impact any researcher has on the context of the research activity is one that warrants consideration. The presence of a researcher in any research context does alter or impact the context to be investigated and so the ways that researchers undertake to minimise this impact is important to be noted.

In the current study the impact that I may have had on household activity was an issue I sought to minimise. I undertook to do this by not making any requests of the child participants or their families as to the activity that we would undertake or engage in during the family conversations. At no point did I make requests to see particular activities or that the children should perform particular exercises. The one exception was the photography activity, where the child participants and their families were asked to take photos of their favourite possessions or activities (using a supplied disposable camera). These were to be photos that would later be used as conversation starters.

In the school context, I sought to minimise the impact I had on the context by where and how I positioned myself, sitting on low chairs in semi hidden places, behind the class' main sitting area; by reducing my interactions with the members of the class; and by reducing my eye contact with the members of the class. To that end, several teachers commented that they forgot my presence in their classes.

Historically specific research

This research project is an historically specific snapshot of these participating children as they move from home to school in 2011. While the idea of a single snapshot may seem a limitation, to explore the stories of transition from home to school for a number of individual emergent bilingual children; highlighting both the family and the teacher's perspectives has given thick, rich data of this significant period, opening a window on the lived experiences of children and families who are often silent in the school setting.

Teachers' interpretation of literacy

Classroom literacy sessions (observed by the researcher) were those periods delineated by each classroom teacher involved in the project. The researcher was dependent on the teacher's expertise in the area of literacy education. This added some interest to the observation data as there is an added 'snapshot' of teacher understanding of literacy. An example of this, was when Mrs Fuller, of Downtown

School, insisted on the researcher attending one numeracy block so that a fuller understanding of the classroom activities could be observed.

As can be seen in this overview, the limitations of this study are, in large part, also among its strengths.

Ethical considerations

Prior to commencing the data collection phase, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Wollongong Ethics Committee (HE10/313) on 7 October 2010 (Appendix E). Ethical approval was also gained from the NSW Department of Education and Training (SERAP Number 2019211) on 22 November 2010, prior to the in-school phase of data collection, which began in late January 2011 (Appendix F). On 15 November 2012, an amendment was approved by the University of Wollongong Ethics Committee (HE10/313). This amendment made provision for the use of the photos taken by the child participants and their family members and discussed during the family interviews (Appendix G).

Informed consent

Participant Information Sheets (Appendix B) were provided to the parents of the prospective child participants. Time was allowed for the family members to consider the information provided and ask questions of the researcher, prior to deciding on participation. Written consent was then given by the parents. As all the family participants had English as a second or subsequent language it was necessary to take extra care to clearly explain the project verbally (offering translation) as well as offering the Participant Information Sheets. It was important that parents fully understood the role that they played as participants with their child; as well as understanding what would be asked of their child during the interview and classroom observations. The child participants, due to their age, were asked to give their consent verbally prior to each meeting in their home.

The Principals of each child participant's prospective school were then approached for permission to approach the Kindergarten teachers. Informed, written consent

was then gained from the Kindergarten teachers of each child as they agreed to be interviewed.

As noted, an amendment to the ethical approval for this study was given on 15 November 2012 (Appendix G). This amendment requested permission to use photos of the child participants that were taken as one of the activities undertaken during the family meetings prior to school. The activity involved the children and families being given a disposable camera to take photos of the child participant's favourite activities. Initially, this activity was undertaken to provide a further source of conversation starters with each child. However, the photos themselves proved to be a valuable source of information. Two copies of the photos were printed – one set given to the children on the day and the second copy kept by the researcher as a reminder of each conversation prompt. At the time, each family verbally consented to having the photos used in the study and one of the families offered to provide further photos of family activities (this offer was not accepted). As the data was analysed it became apparent that the use of these photos would be advantageous to the study and so an amendment was made to the project's ethics application and the families were again approached for consent to be formally given.

Note: All primary and co- participants, as well as Principals and Schools have been assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity and ensure confidentiality.

(A copy of all Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms and the verbal request used to ask children for their consent, are included in Appendix B.)

Sensitivity and minimisation of risk and harm

The primary participants, their families, teachers and the schools were all considered in the process of the research design and in ensuring that the design was sensitive to the their needs and privacy; and to minimise risk and harm.

For primary participants and families, discussion of their backgrounds, beliefs, and other aspects of their personal lives, was treated with sensitivity, respect and

professionalism during both meeting and observation. This was evident in the way that the researcher took care to give extended time to the parents to discuss or explain their views on any issue raised by the researcher or by them. Further evidence of the care taken was clear as the researcher devoted extended periods to listening to the children as they talked about topics of interest to them and participated in games and activities introduced at their request.

The extended times spent with each family were arranged according to their availability and were necessarily flexible, including weekend and early evening home visits to accommodate family and work related constraints.

The interviews conducted with teachers were no longer than 30 minutes per interview and were held at the teacher's convenience, either before or after school or during 'Relief from Face to Face' periods (RFF), as the teachers requested.

Anonymity, confidentiality and access to information

All collected, printed data continues to be kept in a locked filing cabinet, in a secure office at the University of Wollongong. This data continues to be accessible only by the researcher and her supervisors. All electronically stored interview data continues to be stored in a password protected computer belonging to the University of Wollongong. Data will continue to be stored for a period of five years after collection. All collected data has been and will continue to be treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.

All primary participant transcripts have been transcribed by the researcher. Teacher interview transcripts were completed by a professional transcription service. All participants, the teachers and the schools involved have been given pseudonyms. Named friends, family members or class mates have also been given pseudonyms. These pseudonyms will be used in all publications (thesis, journal articles, or conference papers) so that no individual, family, teacher or school can be identified.

Power and the researcher's position

There has been a great deal written about power structures and struggles during interviews in the literature (for example Clark & Moss, 2011; Drury, 2007; Mandell, 1988). One significant factor in this study is how the researcher went to great lengths to break down power structures that could have existed or grown up between the researcher and the primary participant; adult and child; native speaker and non-native speaker; citizen and migrant; western and non-western cultural issues. This could also have occurred between the researcher and the adult family members or teachers - researcher and practitioner; male and female.

One of the significant contributions that this study makes is the exploration undertaken into the relationship between the family participants (child and adult) and the researcher.

Families and children

In order to overcome any power issues that became apparent when meeting with these particular young children (and noting the literature that discussed this topic, for example Drury, 2007; Mandell, 1988; Moss & Clark, 2011; Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005), all discussions were conducted with a parent or parents in attendance. Interviews were conducted in the home, so that any anxieties that the child may have had being interviewed by a stranger were somewhat alleviated by the familiarity of the context. Other family members who participated in interviews included younger and older siblings, two grandparents who did not speak English but who remained in the interview room watching what was taking place, an aunt and two very young cousins at various times.

As the researcher, I was careful to meet with the children in their own homes, at times that suited the family; and to sit where the child participant had clear access to me. Added to this, I was quick to pick up on each child's particular interests. During interviews time was taken to ask about special interests. For example, in Raabia's home time was spent singing favourite 'Bananas in Pyjamas' songs; in Abhi's home ballet dancing and gardening were participated in; in each home I

spent time playing games with the child and various siblings who were present. The time taken pursuing the child's interests was valuable in two ways: firstly, it allowed for relationship building to take place, breaking down the child's initial shyness. Secondly, having shared topics of interest allowed for me to move more easily between these topics. Finally, as the children shared their interests, literacy development in various areas and home literate practices were observed and noted.

This 'sliding between' the role of adult researcher meeting with parents and meeting with the child participant was worked on in every meeting and for extended periods (up to 90 minute sessions), both waiting on the child and pursuing the child's answers, playing and talking, taking up the talk with adults when the child decided to move out of the physical interview area (for example the family or lounge room). Moving between the two halves of the interview period – the adult and the child centred.

The role of researcher in this narrative study was heavily interactive, involving taking opportunities as they presented themselves. This stands in contrast to Mandell (1988, 433) who describes her role as 'the least-adult role' and explains her role in interviewing young children as that of abdicating her adult place; and to Clark and Moss (2011) who waited in a preschool setting for children to come to them; and to Sanagavarapu and Perry (2005) who set aside only ten minutes to interview each child participant. The role undertaken in this study included: allowing for time to be taken for children to answer questions; allowing for children to ask questions; and allowing time for extended periods of play. If the interactionist finds meaning making through joint activity and constructed in talk – then this study epitomises the interactionist's framework.

It was important for me to show that there was time to sit and wait for answers or for special items to be found. There was no rush – neither physical nor linguistic. When arriving for a family meeting, I took time to greet the child warmly, asking after a past event or enquiring about preparation for an upcoming event. Other family members were also included. The researcher was careful to remember the

names of people significant to the child – including family members or friends. These alterations to the usual interview structure allowed the children participating to know that their thoughts, activities and significant others were valued and that they could take the time needed to talk at length and at ease in familiar surroundings with assistance if required. These actions would appear to make sense in the interview situation however in many of the cases found where child interviews have been described in the literature these accommodations have often been ignored or forgotten (as noted above). Two notable exceptions were the study *100 Children Go To School* (Hill *et al*, 1998) and the work conducted by Clark and Moss (2011). In Hill *et al*'s (1998) extraordinary Australian research project children's lives were investigated in depth and their opinions sought, their voices recorded. Time was taken to build rapport over a number of meetings and these were conducted in the participants' homes. Clark and Moss's (2011) theoretical work builds a model for ethical research with young children in educational settings and includes some consideration of how meaningful talk with young children is intertwined with activity. Emulating such studies, this project is built around careful listening, rapport building, respect and regard for the particular language needs of the emergent bilingual (or trilingual) participants, a particular element of the current study.

I was also careful to present and preserve my identity as 'researcher' but allowed for the inquisitiveness of the young children. While the family interviews came to be viewed as conversations, care was taken to keep the conversational focus on gathering data from the participants rather than turning to an interrogation of the researcher. However, notwithstanding this ongoing focussing, all three of the children enquired after the researcher's own children (assuming that I had some) and wanted to know about them: gender; names; ages; wanted to see photos; Abhi wanted to know what they ate for breakfast. They were also keen to discuss aspects of my appearance: Abhi was interested in my toe nail polish; two of the girls noted the change in my hair length between the first set of interviews and the final one. These interchanges, breaking many of the generally prescribed protocols for interviewing techniques, opened many conversations and added to the depth of

the trust between the researcher and the child participants. On reflecting on the reasoning behind this I came to the conclusion that young children have no concept of the interview as being anything other than a relationship – or friendship – and these are generally bidirectional in nature.

In interviewing bilingual children and families, issues of asymmetry in the relationship between the researcher from the dominant culture and the participants who are outside the dominant culture, whose cultural and linguistic capital is less valued (Drury, 2007), were bound to arise. This hierarchical relationship is one that the researcher strove to overcome. This asymmetry was partially overcome by the reflexivity of the researcher; but also had to be worked on by all parties as they grew their relationship, little by little, leading to relationships that grew in depth and trustworthiness. Bourdieu's (1999) ideal is for researchers to gather 'natural discourse' – 'as little affected as possible by cultural asymmetry' (611) however, when working with recently arrived migrants or international students and their families, this is not possible except by deep, ongoing and sincere interaction. Mandell's (1988) insight, that to accept research subjects as they were and to acknowledge that there would always be disparity (regarding age, gender, class, race), was both a clear warning and an encouragement to foster open and transparent relationships at every point. Cultural and age asymmetry was always present in these research-based relationships but these asymmetries were not insurmountable.

Teachers

The power relationship between researcher and the teachers involved in the study was significantly different to that experienced with the families and children. The teachers, similar to the researcher, were all English-first speakers with tertiary qualifications, all the teachers had at least four years teaching experience.

There was the potential for teachers to be reluctant for an unknown observer to come to their classrooms – interviewing them and observing their classes for an

extended period. For this reason the researcher was careful to build rapport during the initial interview and to take time to offer practical help in the classroom across the observation period. This included: arriving early each week to assist Ms Chapman with pencil sharpening before class; and staying on in class during the Literacy Block when Lappi was absent acting as a 'classroom helper' for Mrs Fuller. This was particularly important for Ms Chapman (at Sunny Hills Public School) who described herself as shy and stated in the first interview that the researcher was 'very lucky that I'm letting you in my class, I don't usually let adults in' (TI 24 February 2011). During the classroom observations, she again observed the researcher's 'luck' at having been allowed (by the teacher herself) to observe in class, she then noted that she 'somehow just forgot that (I was) there' (TI 15 August 2011).

Through relationship building, teachers became colleagues, often introducing me to other classroom or specialist teachers and explaining the research project in detail.

Child protection and duty of care responsibilities

In accordance with the *Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998*, the researcher applied for a police check. However, as observations of the children in their homes took place with at least one other family member present at all times, to ensure the safety of both the participant and the observer, a police check was deemed unnecessary. The same is true of the researcher's presence in the school setting, because the researcher was not to be alone with any child for any reason, at any time, a police check was again deemed unnecessary. At Downtown Public School the researcher was required to fill in a Prohibited Employment Declaration. The researcher was aware that the *Children and Young Person's (Care and Protection) Act 1998* requires mandatory reporting for children under 16 years of age if any risk or harm was disclosed.

Conclusion

This chapter described the theoretical framework and methodological basis for this research project, following Crotty's (1998) visualisation of the research process. As shown, the epistemological basis for this project rests on the researcher's paradigm that focuses on meaning making being primarily established in interaction and through the sharing of symbols. Also under investigation was the method of exploring the negotiation undertaken by the primary participants as they entered the school context. This symbolic interaction and institutional negotiation fit neatly with taking a narrative approach to data collection and analysis. Finally, this chapter introduced the primary participants in this study, their families and their Kindergarten teachers. Data collection methods, limitations and ethical considerations were also examined.

The fourth chapter, titled 'Out of the mouths of babes: The path from story to restorying', outlines the six lenses used to investigate the data collected during the study.

Chapter 4

Out of the mouths of babes:

The path from story to restorying

Out of the mouths of babes:

The path from story to restorying

The mind is a narrative device: we run on stories. Stories unite all worlds. It is the compelling nature of stories and their telling that impacts on how we relate to each other, how we define who we are, and how and what we learn. Stories are an entry point for meaning-making – a place where learning and life merge. Stories contribute to our development as whole, coherent human beings.

(Lowe, 2002, 7)

Introduction

This chapter aims to link the previous chapter, outlining the theoretical framework and methodologies used in this research project, with the narratives presented in the following chapter by highlighting how the material collected during data collection was organised to create the narratives of each child and their family. These narratives are based on the many descriptive stories collected during the period of transition from home into the first year of formal schooling. This chapter aims to outline the processes used to bring together these collected stories.

Initially, following a chronological ordering, each child has been presented at home, prior to school, together with their family using interview transcripts and researcher reflections. Later, the interview transcripts with each child's teacher and the classroom observations I made during their first term of school have been added to this collection to allow the descriptive story to follow each child into the school setting. Included in these first two stages are the artefacts offered by family and teacher – photos, drawings, reports and work samples. The photos, originally taken to facilitate the children's story telling became woven into the children's talk and the parents' stories. Teachers offered artefacts from the classroom,

unsolicited, and so these were added. Finally, the interview transcript of each of the final family conversations was added to this mosaic of stories to complete the picture of each child's transition to school – as one cohesive narrative. This is a snapshot of the participant's life as each narrative is set in time and place. Kervin noted that 'the process of moving from collected data into descriptive story... was the best way to represent the journey' (2004, 163) that each of the participants (along with their family and teacher) travelled with me, the researcher, as a participant observer.

In this study each narrative, described by Scott and Marshall as 'a major trope for analysing and understanding social life' (2009, 500) was intricately pieced together to 'try and make sense of it all' (Mackay, 2012, 13) in 'intuitive and holistic ways' (Josselson & Lieblich, 1983, xii). The narrative genre harnesses the notion of 'thick description', using the stories revealed in each child's life before, during and directly after the transition to the first year of school as revealed by the child participant, their family and teacher as well as through researcher observation in the classroom. Denzin championed the term 'thick description' identifying that narrative "presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships... the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals" (1989, 83). This understanding of thick description is used to make sense of these many interactions for each individual child (and their family).

Narrative Inquiry recognises and accepts the methodologies of interview, observation, artefacts and researcher reflection and that these are drawn together chronologically, highlighting emergent themes, metaphors and transitions (Cresswell, 2007) to show the multifaceted nature of these young children's lives. Riessman (2008, 6) noted that 'personal narrative encompasses long sections of talk – extended accounts of lives in context... an evolving series of stories that are framed in and through interaction' and she points to the significance of the 'time ordering function of narrative' (Riessman, 2008, 7). In the next chapter each child participant's narrative has been set down with great attention to detail, using the

multitude of stories collected through the data collection episodes, placing them chronologically and with reference to the many participants in the stories.

This inquiry aims to present the transition of three children from home to school, highlighting the literate practices of three families with a particular focus on the significance of these children, as emergent bilingual learners, negotiating their identities across these two significant contexts. It aims to compare and contrast home views with views from school, bringing to light three three-dimensional snapshots of the children's lived experiences of transition using a number of lenses that have aided the researcher to focus on and understand the themes that have arisen across the data.

Using multiple lenses

Crotty (2010, 66) recognised that the theoretical perspective taken in any research is the 'philosophical stance lying behind the methodology'. From a symbolic interactionist perspective the data collected has been understood through the 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world(s)' being studied (Crotty, 2010, 67). In order to accomplish this, that is, to draw together the many threads of each child's narrative, a number of lenses were used to view the collected data. These lenses were selected because they could add clarity and focus through interpretive comment to the over 600 pages of transcripts, dozens of photos and pages of photocopied reports, and drawings. The following sections aim to describe the various lenses used during analysis including:

- deep immersion in the collected data
- the issue of voice
- understanding the various contexts of data collection
- analysing the use of language
- investigation of visual artefacts
- researcher reflexivity.

Deep immersion in the collected data

Interview data for each participant was analysed (after transcription) using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. Data were read thoroughly to gain an overall picture. Data from each participant's home conversations and school interactions were coded; emerging categories and key words noted. Emerging themes within and across the participants' data were recorded. These gave rise to local theory (Quinn, 2004), the limits of which have been determined and further explored; once this "analytic framework form(ed) a systematic substantive theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p113) the results were ready for further analysis. The data management software, NVivo 8, was used as an additional tool to assist in the organisation of the interview material. Data were analysed to find both the chronology within the stories and the themes within and across the participants' data. Triangulation of field notes (from observations and interviews), coded transcripts, artefacts and the researcher's notes allowed for thicker, richer description (Denzin, 2011) of the lives being restoried.

The issue of 'voice'

In qualitative research the issue of whose voice is heard in the rendering of data has been significant, much debate over the issue of power and how best to collect and present data in an effort to overcome perceived power imbalances between participant and researcher has continued (Charmaz, 2006). Table 4.1 shows an overview of change in the roles of the researcher and the participant across four major theoretical paradigms, as identified in Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) 'Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research'. This movement highlighted altered power relations between the two actors in the research relationship, the researcher and the participant. In Positivism and Postpositivism, the researcher was understood to undertake the role of informant for key stakeholders about participant data. Here the researcher attempts to preserve objectivity by only recording data *through* the researcher's own voice. In Critical Theory, where the researcher '*has* a voice, but also *imparts* the voice of the subjects' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, 115 – italics added), the researcher acts as an advocate. The phrase 'to give voice to' a minority group

is seen in research reflecting this paradigm, indicating that the data collected reflects one clear voice that is representative of the whole group's concern.

Item	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical theory et al.	Constructivism
Voice	"Disinterested scientist" as informer of decision makers, policy makers, and change agents.		"Transformative intellectual" as advocate and activist.	"Passionate participant" as facilitator of multivoice reconstruction.

Table 4.1 Taken from Table 6.2 Paradigm Positions on Selected Practical Issues
(Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, 99)

Using a Constructivist paradigm, researchers have taken the language of 'voice' and altered it to *recognise* the multiple 'voices' of participants. The research is understood to be a reconstruction of the many voices involved, this to some extent includes the researcher's own voice.

In the fourth edition of Denzin and Lincoln's Handbook (2011) this continuum is extended. Table 4.2 highlights the position of researcher and participant in the Participatory paradigm. The researcher's reflexivity became an important aspect of this paradigm, power is understood to be divided among individuals in the research, including researcher and participant. In this paradigm meaning is co-constructed by the researcher and participant together.

Participatory
Researcher reflexivity – relies on critical self-awareness. The participant voice is present in context in the research.

Table 4.2 Taken from Table 6.2 Paradigm Positions on Selected Practical Issues
(Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, 99)

This movement brought with it the overt outcome of '*giving*' the participants' thoughts, words, opinions and experiences a place of value so that key

stakeholders could 'hear' the previously silenced voices of those deemed to be part of minority or marginalised groups. Drury (2007, ix), in her study of young bilingual children making the transition to Nursery in the UK, discusses the process of 'giving voice to children and their families... who otherwise might not be heard'. However, Drury's representation of her young child participants is one of individuals who lack power and so require the 'giving' of voice. The power tensions appear to remain in this advocate-biased, reflexive study.

The power tensions engendered by the notion of a group of people needing to be '*given*' a voice or even plural voices - begs the question – is there no way for researchers to find a method of revealing the existing thoughts, opinions and experiences – the voices – of those they study or research with, through well grounded, ethical and valid research that is not deeply tainted by issues associated with the researcher's power? It is here that the role of the researcher comes to the fore. As the notion of the participant altered across the paradigm changes (seen in Tables 4.1 and 4.2), so too did the notion of the researcher – from 'scientist' to 'participant' or 'facilitator'. From a participatory standpoint, the researcher's 'intent is to make sense (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world' (Cresswell, 2007, 21). This interpretation is filtered through the researcher's own thoughts, opinions and experiences. Therefore an understanding of researcher reflexivity becomes critical to understanding how the interpretation of collected data will influence the report produced.

In an effort to further extend or explore this continuum, and in order to speak in to this issue, I have deliberately used extended, uninterrupted excerpts from the participants' dialogues in an effort to preserve their intent and capture elements of their lived experience. The reasoning behind my actions has been that I have wanted not to 'give voice to' nor to allow the reader to 'hear the voices of' (acknowledging that there are multiple voices, each actor having his or her own voice) but this study was designed simply to **clear a space** for the voices of the participating children and their families to speak, unfettered. Meetings were designed to allow participants (child, family, teacher and researcher) to clarify,

query questions and answers, check meanings attributed, to re-check ideas or stories told.

Clearing a space for the voices of the participants in this study altered the place of the researcher. The researcher took up the role of learner (Cairney & Munsie, 1992). In deliberately placing myself in a less powerful position I attempted to overturn the 'power' dynamic in the relationships within this study. This led to some interesting interactions described in the following chapter. Fitting with the chosen narrative style, I positioned myself as *collator* of stories. Working to present the offered stories with as little interpretation or indeed crafting as possible.

Understanding this research as 'clearing a space' also altered the place of the participant. As researcher, I took up the role of 'learner' in the data collection phase, so the participants were understood to be the 'experts'. This idea that the participant is the expert in their own context, in their own lives (McNaughton, 2001) has often been overlooked in research that views participants as silent. This may be most easily seen in the teacher interviews as teachers are understood to have expertise in their professional positions within the school context. However, in this study, both the family members and the children themselves are listened to as experts in their own lived experiences. Experts who have undertaken to share vital information about their experiences of transition to school.

As collator of these children's (and families') stories, I found myself in the role of both narrator and participant, an actor in the narratives I was drawing together. Using large chunks of the multiple participants' dialogues, I also had to reflect on my place in the mosaic. This thesis, a collection of stories, is presented as a cleared space for the protagonists to speak – telling their own stories.

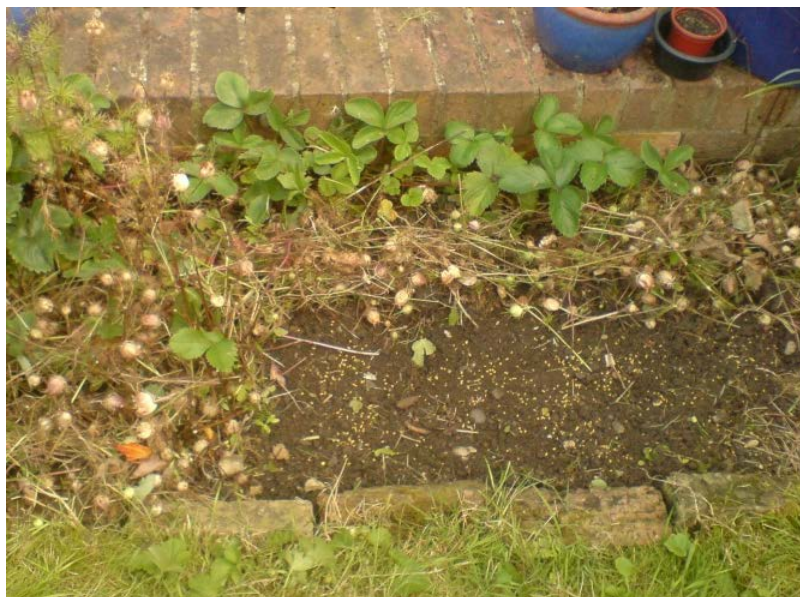


Figure 4.1 Clearing a space...

Figure 4.1 is a visualisation of the process of clearing space – rather as a gardener clears a space in order to allow newer plants to take up a place in the garden. This study recognises that the voices of the dominant culture are readily heard.

However, with the diversity engendered by globalisation, as the makeup of the Australian population alters, newer voices need a space to be heard from, voices that are not silent but may not be heard without a space being cleared, voices that may not reflect the current dominant culture.

As I approached this study, aware of the multiplicity of voices that were to be included, I formulated a picture of the method of data collection which can be seen at Figure 4.2. This figure shows the columns and rows of a ‘neat’ research project, where structure is clear and the boxes and arrows show exact matches to the timetabled movements of researcher and participants.

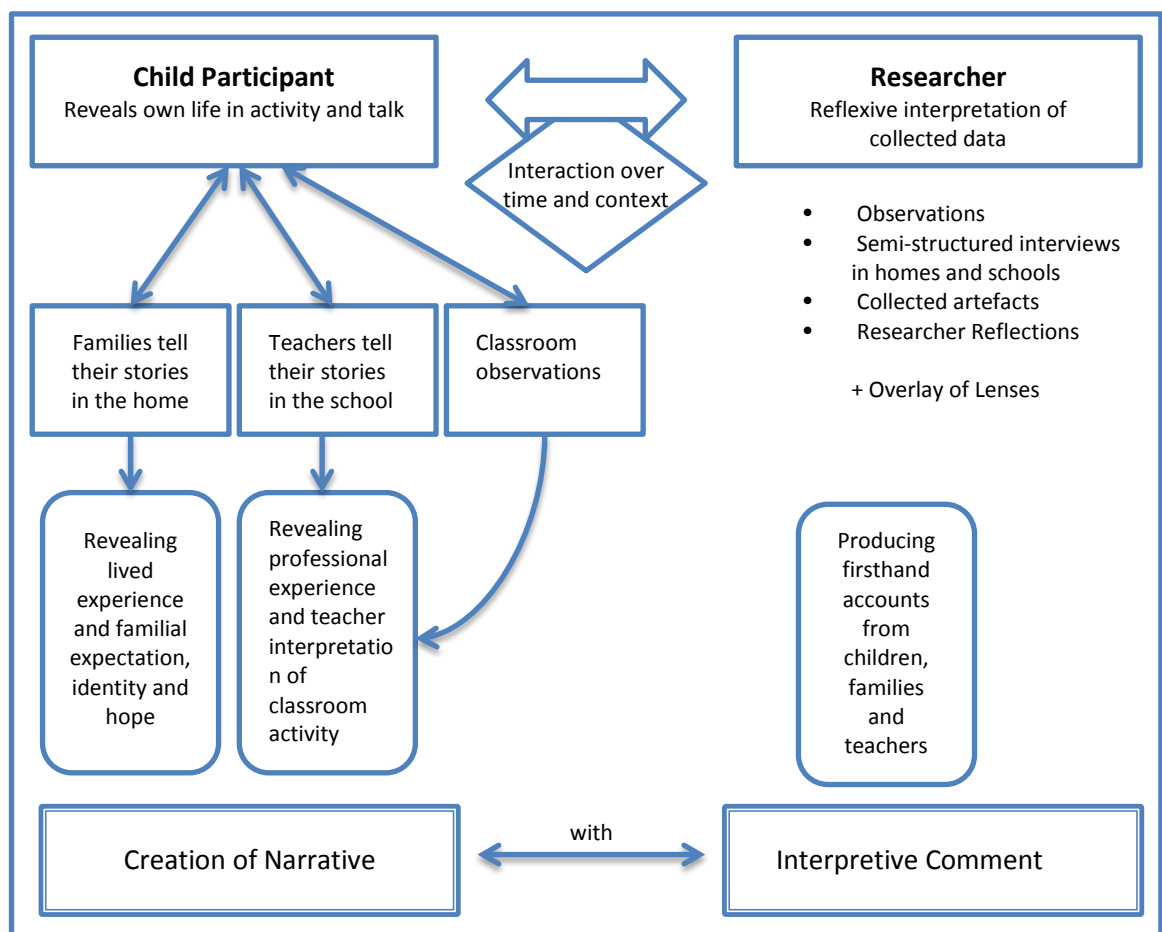


Figure 4.2 Participant voices and the construction of a narrative

However, as the data were collected the ‘messiness’ or complexity of the undertaking became apparent. The overlapping of roles for the researcher and participants, how the many voices were incorporated into each child’s narrative and how interpretive comments were added, all adhered less to a ‘neat’ set of boxes and more to the next figure (see Figure 4.3). The construction of each narrative focussed on the revealed experiences of each child participant. The children took time in the family interviews to talk to their parents and the researcher but also revealed their interests and lives in their activities. Talk and activity were, therefore, included in the transcriptions and reflective notes made. These activities included: singing, dancing, scooting, jigsaw puzzles, reading, playing with toys, board and card games played with siblings and the researcher, gardening, drawing and colouring in, even sharing DVD watching in one home. The

means of data collection with other participants (in the left hand column in Figure 4.2 and on the right hand side of Figure 4.3), first, the stories given by the families, were collected to reveal their lived experiences and expectation of the transition process. These stories were often interwoven with the child's stories and play.

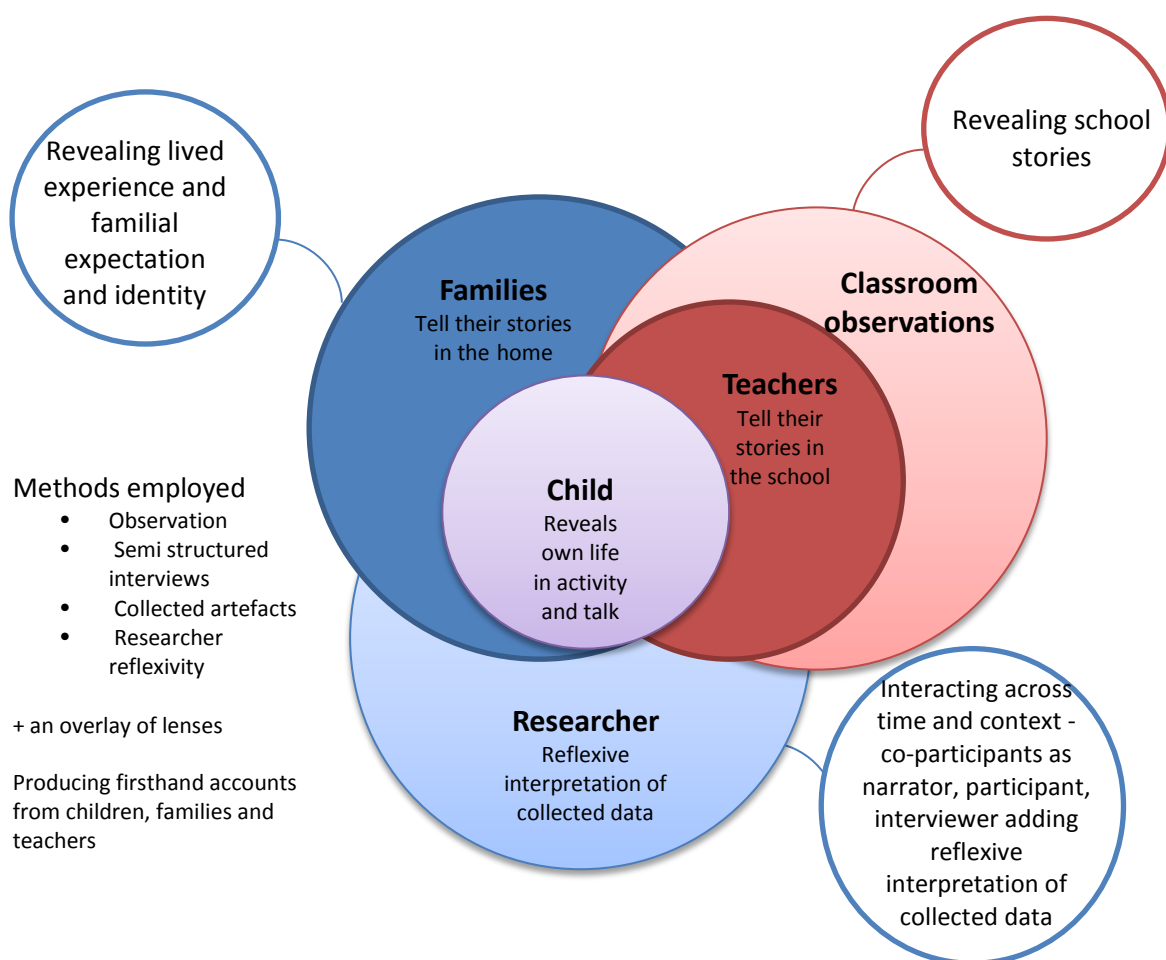


Figure 4.3 Creation of a narrative with interpretive comment

The teachers' interviews (middle column in Figure 4.2 and in the nested circles on the right of Figure 4.3) revealed their perspectives, expertise and experiences of teaching and their understanding of the child participant's background and transition to school; next came the classroom observations which were carried out in order to gain vital insights into the transition experience. The stories collected were drawn together to create a narrative of transition, through interview and observation with collected artefacts. Interwoven with the restoried stories came the researcher's interpretations – to complete the narrative.

The narratives depicting the lived experiences of these emergent bilingual children, drawing on data from multiple sources, triangulated and rechecked through ongoing dialogue, highlight this important period of transition.

Context

Every text has a context (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). The narratives produced in this study were pieced together from the many 'small stories' (Andrews et al, 2009; Bamberg, 2006) revealed by the participants, each story contextually situated. In this study, context was analysed within its social, cultural and historical parameters (Hunter, 2010). Context, then, acted as a lens to provide clarity to the narrative.

When discussing transition to school, Sanagavarapu and Perry (2005) suggest the importance of context, noting that stories of transition must be placed within the home and school contexts. Using an ecological model, based on Bronfenbrenner's work (1979), they claim that this transition cannot be fully understood until the entire context is taken into account – rather than assessing each child as an 'individual', somehow devoid of context. To that end, the narratives of each child in this study are firmly founded in their home and, later, school contexts. This contextual lens adding to the depth and richness of the data presented. Diagrams were created, for this study, to highlight the relationships evident in each interview setting. These diagrams are loosely based around Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which highlights the nested factors impacting an individual's life. The series of figures following depict the relationships evident in each interview setting with the backdrop of influences that were acting on the actors at that time.

Each child's home interviews, with their family present, were positioned within the home context and set against the wider influences of Australian and country of heritage cultures. Detailed accounts of the home setting, cultural and language background, educational background of the parents and hopes for the educational success of the child were set in this context (see Figure 4.4).

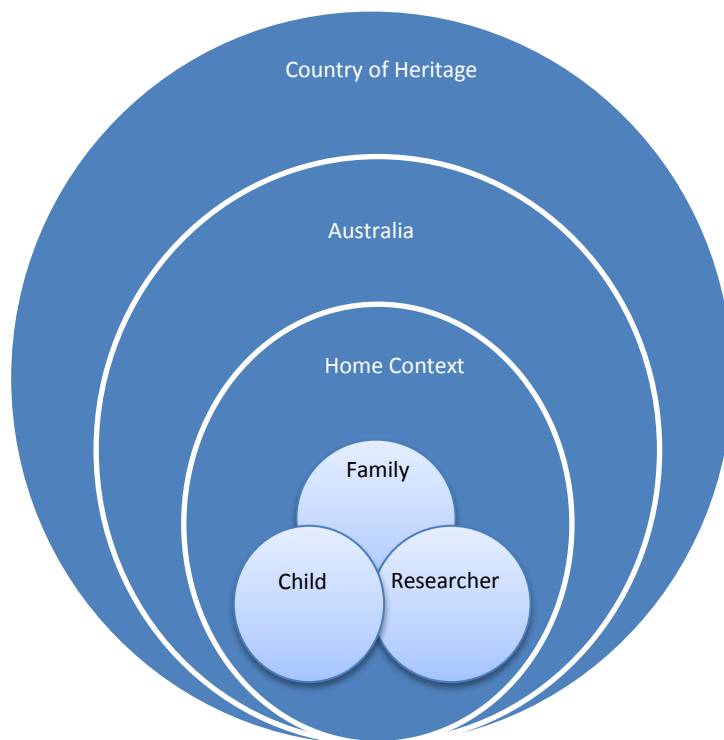


Figure 4.4 A nested narrative: The children's family stories set within the home context

The children's school settings are also depicted in their narratives. These include data collected from the teacher interviews and classroom observations (Figure 4.5). The teacher interviews highlight the backdrop of the NSW Department of Education and Training's (NSW DET now known as Department of Education and Communities, NSW DEC) demands on the teacher; the school's policies and requirements; the makeup of the class, and include some aspects of the community's influences; and the teacher's personal understandings related to their own background.

Also in this figure, the classroom observations highlight the influences that pervade classroom interactions, including the DET, school, the teacher and class. Each of these factors influences how the child participates in the classroom and their experience of transition to school.

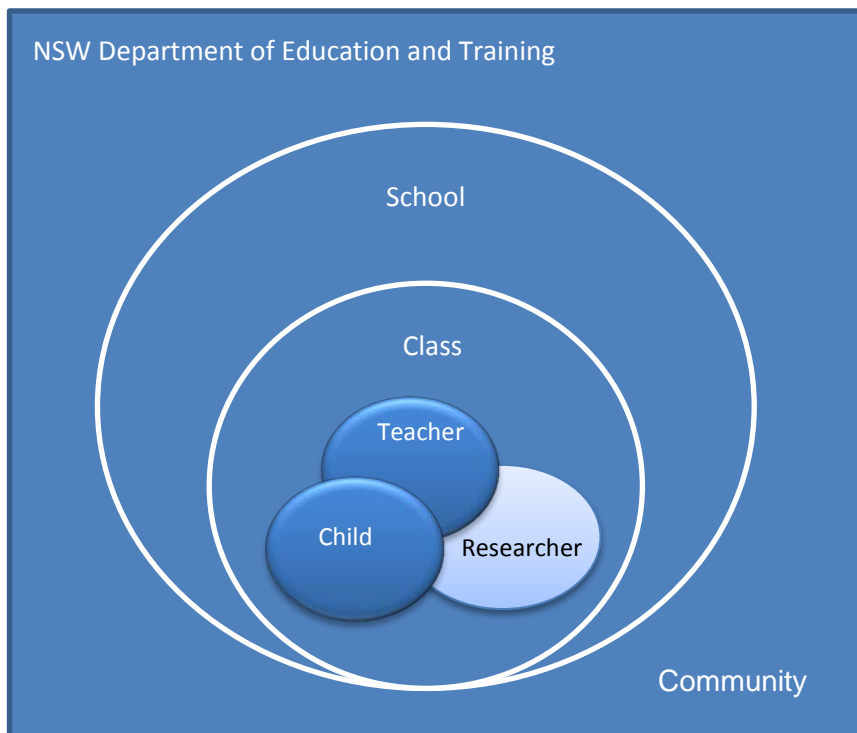


Figure 4.5 A nested narrative: The children's and the teachers' school stories set within the school context

The final interviews, with the families in their homes, brought the full picture together as the children alongside their families reflected on their lived experience of transition (see Figure 4.6). The influences of both the home setting and the school setting are observed through these interviews. Of particular interest in this diagram is the influence of the school setting on the family in the home setting cutting across the influence of key features in the child's background. Examples of this influence were noted in the introduction of games such as playing school and school role playing as well as discussion of homework.

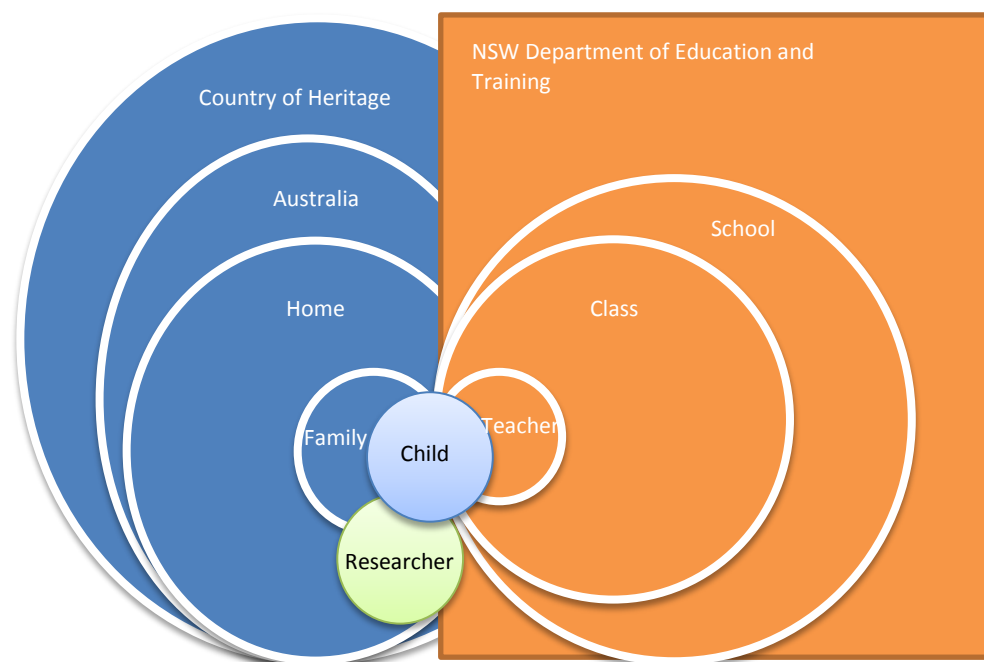


Figure 4.6 The context of the final interviews

Language

According to Richardson, ‘narrative is the best way to understand the human experience, because it is the way humans understand their own lives’ (1990, 65). Therefore, how language is used in each story told; how meaning is conveyed through the words spoken; is of vital importance to how narrative is constructed. Richardson notes (1990, 62) ‘[h]ow we write lives is important, theoretically and practically. Civic discourse about societal identity, social goals, and societal transformation is largely constituted through social scientific language’. In light of this, it is not only important to note the language used in the presenting of stories but the language used in interpretation as well. With this in mind, how data are analysed and how stories are presented, using the participants’ own words, is vital to the validity and honesty of any narrative research.

Understanding and analysing the participants’ language focused my attention in each data collection context. How language was used in the home was noted, for example: how each child interacted with her environment and those around her; and how the adults and other family members explained elements of their lives

including their family history, educational background, professional standing, relationship with their child and preparation for transition to school. During the teacher interviews, teachers' also positioned themselves – in this case, as experts in their professions, as caregivers and as informed participants. In each setting, careful analysis of the language used and the stories told, revealed how each actor understood their role/s, indeed themselves, in that context.

Language was considered in terms of the stories, phrases or words used as well as the silences. In the home context the stories, phrases or words of the child participants and family members were considered as they revealed their lived experiences during a period of transition. These also revealed the constructed identities of the individuals and the family units. Evidence of literate practice was noted through language and activity. In both the initial family interviews and the classroom observations, the children's silences were noted and these impacted the interpretation of the interviews and observations.

The teacher interviews revealed the teachers' understandings of themselves as 'experts' through the language used and how the teachers positioned themselves in the interview context. The teachers' language also highlighted how the teachers perceived the child participants generally as well as after the observational period.

Through carefully focussing on the language used by the many participants, emergent themes became evident. The lens of language brought to focus the first glimpse of the themes within and across the children's narratives as the raw data were analysed. The emergent themes will be revealed through each child's narrative in Chapter 5 and will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Investigation of visual artefacts

The fourth lens used to assist in the analysis of the collected data focuses on visual artefacts. Understanding that their definition of literacy was shaped by their sociocultural theoretical framework – Pahl and Rowsell (2010) state that artefacts are a means of opening up the social contexts of the literate practices of those they research. Pahl and Rowsell's seminal work (2010) investigates how an

understanding of visual artefacts might further enrich the depth of data analysis. Rowsell elucidates this point further by adding that ‘objects (artefacts) signal essential dimensions of lived realities’ (2011, 334). Likewise, Bourdieu (1990) noted that analysing the visual exposes the histories of those involved.

Artefacts have physical features; they embody people, stories, thoughts, identities and experiences; their value being attributed by the teller of those stories. Pahl and Rowsell go on to highlight that these artefacts and the stories told ‘open up worlds for meaning makers’ (2010, 3). In essence, artefacts are symbols of relationships or events that matter to the meaning maker. Through artefacts, the teller tells stories of their life.

In this study artefacts and stories of artefacts were collected and noted in each data collection site. In the homes of the child participants –

- children, siblings and parents showed family photo albums, books, workbooks and maps;
- families shared their television watching – Omar showed and translated his Arabic news, while his daughter, Raabia spent some time singing along to her Bananas in Pyjamas DVD, pointing out her favourite songs and engaging me in singing with her;
- game playing was a significant activity and involved the children inviting me to play too
 - Lappi invited me to play the game ‘Guess Who?’ with her and her sisters
 - Abhi had a reading game that involved matching words and pictures
 - Raabia and Lappi shared jigsaw puzzles with me
- families shared artefacts that revealed glimpses of their country of heritage
 - Omar sharing Arabic news programmes
 - Lappi’s family used the Atlas that I shared with them to show and discuss their island home
 - Abhi shared photos of her parents’ wedding

- families shared foods from their countries of heritage or stories and photos of favourite foods.

As a further means of engaging each child, a disposable camera was given to each in order for her (with the aid of family members) to take photos of things, people or activities that she deemed to be important in her life. This activity was undertaken in order to gain further insights into the children's lives outside the periods of researcher visits and to open up new avenues for our conversations (Clark & Moss, 2011). The photography activity turned into a significant source of data in this study as the photos proved a good entry to conversation with the children and as they also provided increased revelatory documentation of the children's and families' literate practices. Examples of the children's photography included:

- Abhi took photos of cooking a favourite traditional dish with her mother
- Abhi also took photos of her own section of garden and took me on a tour as we discussed the photo
- Lappi showed pictures, taken by her mother, of her using the family computer
- Raabia took pictures of a trip to their local park.

Each child recounted how the particular photos were taken and, more significantly, the importance of the activity or object shown. Raabia and her mother also recounted the story of cooking together, the photo having been lost as it was too dark to print. The significance of this activity for mother and daughter became apparent in their story of both cooking and the importance of the loss of the associated photo. Through the children and families revealing their lived experiences, in their photographs, they were further enabled to highlight their view of important factors in their lives and to show themselves as 'experts in their own lives', a notion that often goes unnoticed in research by adults, for adults (Clark & Moss, 2011).

These times spent together were rich with the telling of stories of significant moments in the participants' lives and highlighted numerous literate family

practices. In this way artefacts were shown and discussed, stories retold and, through this process, histories and identities were revealed.

In the school setting, teachers offered copies of assessment records and work samples to highlight their own expertise and to explain their judgements made about the participating children and their progress during the first term of school. In the final teacher interview, each of the teachers offered copies of documents that they considered important to this study. The number and type of documents offered varied considerably and reflected the value that the teacher attributed to these, as documentation of the children's work was not specifically requested by the researcher.

In the final family interviews the children and their family members reflected on the transition process through the sharing of stories and discussion of school practices. As Rowsell points out, 'what makes this kind of work distinctive, is an approach to data collection that not only contextualizes research in space, time and through identities, but also regards material worlds as reflections of people's real lives and real-world settings' (2011, 334). As with the work of Pahl and Rowsell (2010; also Clark & Moss, 2011; Rowsell, 2011) the literate practices of the children in this study and their families were revealed through the stories told as well as through the artefacts shown and, in some instances, given to the researcher. These home-based stories further revealed the identities of the meaning makers, the story tellers, and highlighted how their identities were 'inextricably interwoven with place' (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, 18).

(A collage of collected artefacts can be found at Appendix H.)

Researcher reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is a requisite tool or lens for understanding how the collected data have been reviewed and presented. As with each of the other lenses used to review the collected data, researcher reflexivity was utilised to aid better understanding and interpretation of the data presented. Reflexivity is particularly important in narrative research, as it encapsulates an understanding of the

researcher's own background, biases and experience, to assist the reader to understand how each of these has influenced the restorying of the participants' lived experiences. Angen claimed that, within an interpretive perspective, all understanding is based on 'what we know of and how we negotiate within the culturally informed relationships and experiences, the talk and text, of our everyday lives' (2000, p384). There is a focus on the importance of researcher reflexivity, with an understanding that effort must be given to identifying particular bias and background so as to examine the impact of the researcher on participants, their stories and the research as a whole; as well as to 'value the researcher's own contributions... interpretive research depends on the intersubjective creation of meaning and understanding' (Angen, 2000, p383). Bourdieu (1999) adds that 'distortion is embedded in the very structure of the research relationship ... (these) have to be understood and mastered as part of a practice which (is) reflective' (p608). Through this interactive process the researcher's own biases are laid bare in order to further prepare the space that the voices of the participants will be heard from. In this study, this is particularly important as the participating children (and often the families) are new to the dominant culture of both the country and the education system. As a result, understanding how the researcher is positioned, as a perceived member of the dominant culture, who has lived in and participated in that culture, is critical to the restorying and interpretation of the collected participant data.

As a young adult I had the privilege of studying overseas and in another language. This experience of not fitting in to the dominant culture, of being silent and of finding my voice, of being unknown and having to establish my identity in the culture generally and as a learner, all developed a thirst to understand how others establish themselves. It also gave me a deep respect for those who, through necessity or will, move between cultures.

Later, as a primary grades teacher, I developed an interest in the possibilities that surround learning in the early years, as well as the social nature of the learning activity and environment all enhanced the teaching experience. Later, with adult

students at a TAFE (Technical and Further Education) college, this developed into a deep interest as I experienced the highs and lows associated with adults studying literacy and communications subjects. This was also the moment where I first taught English as a second or subsequent language and discovered a passion for teaching in this area. The joys of success, the challenges of learning as a child or an adult, the cultural interplay, the significance of interaction, all enhanced the discovery of this field for me. Within these contexts I became interested in how students position themselves as learners, how they establish their identities as learners.

Increasingly, I became interested in cross cultural communications and had opportunities to run workshops in the local community, promoting awareness of social justice issues related to poverty and social development. Seeing young children become literate participants in their families, schools and community; seeing adult migrants establishing their voices in English. I found that the thread that wove through all levels of interest, was one of self-enablement, of revealing and negotiating identity in a new context.

Questions formed about what happens to those whose voices are unheard, whose cultural capital is not valued? These questions took greater prominence in my thinking. What I had taken for granted, from within the comfort of the well-educated, middle class, kindled a desire to use my skill, education and interests to assist others to access the very thing that I had taken for granted – the right and space to speak and be heard.

By focussing on the lens of the researcher's reflexivity another aspect of the mosaic is brought to clear view, adding to the depth of colour in these narratives and extending the breadth of their scope.

Final word...

As noted, Scott and Marshall described narrative as 'a major trope for analysing and understanding social life' (2009, 500) and as such the lenses employed to view

and understand the raw data are critical in drawing the reader through the 'detail, context, emotion and the webs of social relationships... (to allow) the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals' to be heard (Denzin, 1989, 83). In this thesis, a cleared space, narrative has been used to present snapshots of social life and using the six lenses outlined I have set out the narratives of three children in transition, highlighting the emerging themes in this large data set.

This chapter examined the lenses employed to move from collected stories to narrative. These lenses included viewing the data through deep immersion; clarifying issues of 'voice'; a clear understanding of the different contexts of data collection; understanding the place of visual artefacts; acknowledging the influence of language and narrative techniques used by the various participants; investigating researcher reflexivity (Riessman, 2008); and becoming aware through all these of the emergence of certain themes that will be noticed in the following chapter and further discussed in the sixth chapter.

Chapter 5

Children in Transition:

Family Stories

Children In Transition: Family Stories

Narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society. (Barthes, 1977, 79)

(I)t would be naïve to assume that these stories provide a 'pristine' reflection of life as it is lived but rather these are subjective texts. However, it is precisely this that makes narrative such a meaningful form of expression, it is in the act of making sense and explaining events that lends narrative its evaluative and explanatory value. (Stone & O'Shea, 2012, 70)

Introduction

This chapter is divided into three main sections, each takes up the story of one child participant during their transition to school, including the weeks leading up to the beginning of the first year of formal schooling (known as Kindergarten in New South Wales), the first days of Kindergarten and the first ten week term of school. The narrative formed chronicles the transition of each child moving from home to school in their own words and in the words of their parents, siblings and teachers. Each transformed narrative or descriptive story is the endpoint of a process of bringing together the stories contributed by each individual in the participant grouping, though their individual narratives are ongoing (Kervin, 2004). They are drawn together as a mosaic (Chase, 2008; Clark & Moss, 2011), shade upon shade, piece by piece, to develop the 'thick description' central to Narrative Inquiry methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As described by Kervin this process was 'the best way to represent the journey that each participant... and I travelled' (2004, 163) during the period of transition to school.

Each narrative, with interpretive comment, has been developed from the analysis of the collected data from:

- three unstructured family interviews or conversations including the child and all family members present at the time of each home visit. These visits ranged from 30-90 minutes in length.
- one semi-structured teacher interview of approximately 30 minutes each, conducted prior to the classroom observations. This interview was designed to elicit information about the teacher's own background and understanding of teaching emergent bilingual children
- six classroom observations of the morning literacy block during Term 1 of Kindergarten, each of two hours duration
- one semi-structured teacher interview conducted following the classroom observations of approximately 30 minutes duration. This interview was primarily designed to elicit information about the teacher's reflections on the child-participant and their family, their reflections on the transition to school for this child and feedback on the child's starting point and subsequent literacy growth.
- one final family conversation of approximately 60-90 minutes duration, conducted following all the teacher interviews and observations, with the child and all available family members. This final interview was designed to elicit the family's and child's reflections on the transition to school.
- Following each interview and observation I have developed a reflective commentary arising from the meeting. These have no particular structure or length but the purpose of the reflections was to record thoughts, queries and emerging themes as they occurred so as to preserve an element of the freshness of the interaction.

Each child's narrative account was storied using an outline following the chronological sequence of meetings, observations and teacher interviews:

1. Family story
2. At home
3. Movement to school: Orientation
4. Kindergarten: Term One
5. Reflections on transition to school
6. Summary

The narrative summaries provided reflecting the following research questions that have guided this inquiry:

- What are the lived experiences of the emergent bilingual child-participants as each makes the transition from home to school, with reference to their literate practices and preparation for school?
- How is the capital that each child brings to school and their identity negotiated in the Kindergarten classroom with reference to family activity, teacher practice or school policy?

Notes:

Reference to the teacher - During teacher interviews (TI) I have used the teacher's first name which reflects our relationship as colleagues. However, during the Classroom Observations (CO) and Family Interviews (FI) I have used the teacher's formal classroom name (eg. Mrs Cooper) reflecting the teacher's relationship to the participant and her family.

Reference to the child-participants - Throughout this chapter the child participants are referred to by the teachers as being 'ESL kids' or as 'being ESL'; while I use the term emergent bilingual to refer to the child participants.

All participants – Throughout the thesis all those participating have been assigned pseudonyms.

Raabia

Family Story

Raabia was 5 years and 4 months in early January 2011 when the first interview was conducted in her home (5 years 5 months when she entered school). Raabia lived with her mother (Shazia), father (Omar) and younger sister (Rehana). At the time of the first interview the Askari family had lived in Australia for 18 months having moved from the Middle East, with Rehana born just two months after their arrival.



Omar Shazia

Raabia Rehana

Figure 5.1 Askari Family Participants

The Askari's moved to Australia from the Middle East for Omar to undertake Doctoral research, he is an Engineer. Omar first completed a twelve month English course at the English College associated with the University that he was then to attend. Omar had already completed a Master's degree in his home country, and was employed as a university lecturer there. His study in Australia was sponsored by his home government. Shazia worked as a Computer Engineer but took extended maternity leave whilst in Australia and so was caring for the children and undertaking home duties at the time of this enquiry. Both Omar and Shazia graduated from the university located in the city they grew up in.

At home the family speaks Arabic, at the end of our meetings together Shazia reflected:

Shazia It is hard for us to speak another language, sometimes we try to speak English but... (laughing) we change to Arabic! (FI – 13 August 2001)

Raabia appeared a very friendly, even extroverted, child in her home environment. She was keen to build a friendship with me, a stranger to her and her family. Raabia's family were also very welcoming at each visit. The welcome I received included Omar taking time out from his studies for each of the first three home visits prior to school beginning. At each visit we enjoyed tea together and when we arranged to meet on Australia Day (as that time suited their schedule) we celebrated the morning together with Middle Eastern sweet treats (that Shazia prepared) and Tim Tam biscuits (a popular Australian chocolate biscuit that I contributed).

Raabia appeared highly motivated to learn in both English and Arabic. Omar and Shazia supported and scaffolded Raabia's learning, particularly her language learning. Raabia did not attend preschool or any out-of-home care prior to school.

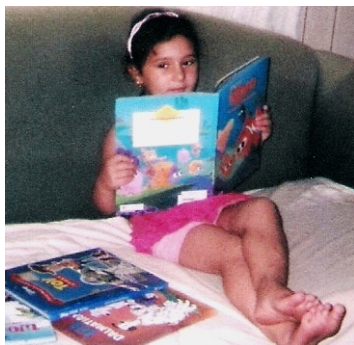


Figure 5.2 Raabia reading at home

During the year leading up to Raabia beginning school the family began to teach Raabia English. Omar and Shazia encouraged Raabia to watch English-language children's TV programmes as well as DVDs they bought; they also purchased English-language children's books to read together. The books included story books and number and alphabet books. The TV and DVD programmes included pay television and purchased DVDs of ABC's Bananas in Pyjamas programmes, as well as cartoons from the Walt Disney range. Both parents were concerned for Raabia to learn English well as she would have four years at school in Australia (FI – 26 January 2011). Raabia learned a lot, Omar quipped 'Sometime, Raabia, she tell me 'Dad, speak English' – she speak with me English!' (FI – 26 January 2011). As parents, they could also see the benefits of Raabia learning English for future

tertiary study in her home country. Significantly, in the final family interview, Shazia also explained that they had decided not to send Raabia to an Arabic Community Language School. 'No, I can do it,' stated Shazia, 'I want to be sure she learn everything about English... then I will try to help her to learn the Arabic letter and number' (FI – 13 August 2011). This statement was made despite pressure from family members, notably Shazia's mother.

My Mummy told me – 'Learn her Arabic! Speak with her Arabic – don't let her forget her language, don't let her forget!' Oh but..... I told my Mummy, (Raabia will) never forget her language. And it's easy to learn the alphabet in Arabic and how to write but maybe in the future – not now. But for her, now, if she learn English and she know how to write and read and speak English – when we go back to my country maybe in the future maybe she can, if she know English very well, maybe she can study Medical Engineer.... very easy for her. (FI – 26 January 2011)

In their home country, this family lived with Omar's parents and extended family. They recounted that they were a close-knit family and lived only a block from Shazia's extended family. Whilst in Australia, the family maintained close ties with family members via phone contact using Arabic as the language medium. Since coming to Australia Raabia's family have made a few friends from the Middle East. They found making friends with local Australians very difficult, despite their friendly, outgoing personalities.

Omar It is hard to make friends... especially Australian... (At home) – just the neighbours in the street, in the evening when they finish work – I visit him, you visit me and we enjoy together. And we talk on other subjects.

Shazia All help each other (FI – 20 January 2011)

At the time of the first family interview Raabia had no English-speaking friends. During the family interviews they also did not mention any particular friends that Raabia had of Arabic-speaking background.

Interpretive comment

Raabia's parents were both able to identify their priority for learning English, especially for Omar with his tertiary studies and for Raabia as she entered school in Australia. They also noted the longer term benefits of learning English for Raabia when she returns to their home country, for later study. In the immediate future, English language competence, was perceived as Raabia's entry to friendship and to school success. The Askari's were also balancing pressures from extended family members to teach Raabia Arabic with their own concerns for her to be ready for school here in Australia. Shazia and Omar seemed relaxed about Raabia's ability to catch up on her Arabic, when they return home, deciding that they would put this off until after Raabia had settled in to school in Australia.

Throughout the family interviews one of the pervading themes was the fun of learning English together through playful activity (Gregory, 2006) – the family appeared to enjoy the learning experience as well as seeing the humour in the situation when they made mistakes. While this necessarily had a serious side for Omar, in his postgraduate studies, there was a great deal of joy and pride shown, as well as a vision for the future, in how Raabia's parents dealt with their daughter's language learning.

Unveiling an Identity

Throughout the first three meetings, the family's identity as coming from a Middle Eastern nation was discussed. The conversations included the history of their home city; their home country as a nation moving away from turmoil and concerned for the education of its citizens. In each of these discussions, with Omar as the instigator, a window on their culture and their lives was opened. The second story highlights Omar's and Shazia's valuing of their government's universal education policy as well as their understanding of their daughter as a learner, becoming literate and moving along an educational trajectory to become an educated bilingual girl, and later woman. Each window shed light onto the family's identity and the value they place on education.

A city of history in an ancient civilisation

From our first meeting Omar was keen to talk about his country, its politics, history and recent news. He explained that their home city was in the north and very ancient, dating 'back around 3000 years... We have history of Egyptian, Babylonian and before' (Omar - FI – 20 January 2011). Omar linked his country's history with that of Hammurabi, Babylonian prince, who 'is the first person who made the law and in this area – the first writing' (Omar – FI 20 January 2011). These links between historic civilisations and education were important to Omar and he returned to them several times. Omar's pride in his nation's historic priority on education was clear in his choice of conversation topics and was lived out in the family's own priorities, placing high value on education and preparation for school.

Education, a cornerstone

Omar and Shazia also acknowledged that their home country, an oil-rich nation, troubled by recent unrest, had experienced a period of isolation from the world, particularly academic isolation. ‘(Our) academics were unable to mix with those from other countries. This made research and the gathering of knowledge very difficult’ (FI – Researcher’s Reflections – recalling the unrecorded conversation with Omar – 26 January 2011). Following the removal of sanctions, academics and students had been enabled to take government scholarships to study abroad, this included Omar’s own scholarship. Both Omar and Shazia discussed the importance of government support for education and how every child was now expected to attend school and university.

Omar All childs must go to school and to the university. You know education is free – primary school, high school and university is free.... You know I come here – I don't pay anything for my own. My government Minister for Higher Education gives me the salary, err gives me the scholarship, pay the fees at university... You know (our country is a) very rich country... because of the oil. They can send their students to study all over the world. (FI – 26 January 2011)

This national movement to improve educational outcomes for all, was also reflected in the Askari's own educational aspirations for their children. They both stated that they hoped all their children would go on to university – 'Yes! We will help them' said Shazia (FI – 26 January 2011). With Raabia being educated in an English-speaking school while they lived in Australia, the Askari's saw the benefit of learning English for her future studies, which Shazia alluded to when she spoke of future study opportunities. These hopes were also seen later in Shazia's pride in Raabia's progress at school, '(Raabia) can understand everything... I think that is very good for the future' (FI - 13 August 2011).

Interpretive comment

Through these conversations, Omar and Shazia construct an identity for themselves and their family. The significance of the rich history, linking ancient civilizations to the present day via a strong educational heritage, threads through the conversations. The family's commitment to personal and national educational goals are reflected in the parents' activity with their daughter in playing card games, jigsaw puzzles, reading to her, teaching her to write and read in two languages. This was also borne out in their holiday activities which included excursions to the zoo and other significant educational sites. These were recounted in the conversations and photographs. Raabia was encouraged to give recounts in English, with her parents supporting her talk. The linking of national and personal educational goals were further revealed as they later discussed their daughter's future at school in New South Wales and later when she would return home.

At home

At home with the Askari's there was a busy-ness that the two young children brought to the small home. Their cottage was situated approximately 10 minutes' drive from the city CBD and university, in a residential suburb.

Raabia initiated conversation, participating enthusiastically, and listening carefully so that she could take part. Her parents commented, more than once, about her engaging nature:

Kathryn (to Raabia) You have to learn two languages...?

Omar Very clever, she is very clever (FI – 20 January 2011)

Speaking about making friends...

Shazia (Raabia) will do it herself... she can do it by herself...

Omar Raabia, she's very social (FI – 26 January 2011)

Raabia was quick to share her toys and other possessions, using these to engage others. For example, during the first home visit, Raabia found a small pink heart sticker and stuck it on my blouse saying "I like you very much" (FI – 13 January 2011).

When Raabia left a conversation she either went to undertake an activity, for example watching a DVD (FI – 20 January 2011) or working on a jigsaw (FI – 13 August 2011); or she departed the room momentarily to find something that she could share with me, for example a book she liked or a picture she had drawn (FI – 20 January 2011). Several times during each visit, Raabia halted conversation by exclaiming 'Just one minute' and she would then run from the room to find something to show or share. This action of halting the conversation often occurred after an instance where Raabia had not understood what had been said or where the conversation had become one between the adults, as in the following instance where I was explaining how to use a disposable camera.

Kathryn You can take photos of your favourite things...

Raabia Just one minute (she runs from the room)... Do you want to see this?
(returning with a lift-the-flap book to show) (FI – 20 January 2011)

Raabia, while not understanding everything in English, was able to keep her place in any conversation. Raabia was also able to demonstrate a level of bilingual sophistication whereby she could engage in a conversation in English, appearing

fully absorbed, but also listen to her parents and then translate their Arabic discussion:

- Raabia (explaining the story of the nursery rhyme about the mother duck who went out one day) She is saying 'sit down' and the baby come over the mother...
- Kathryn Oh – ok. It's good when they come back, isn't it? It'd be sad to lose them. (During this discussion, Omar and Shazia have been speaking quietly in Arabic.)
- Raabia My dad she is saying have the tea for you. (Everyone looks surprised. Her parents look a little embarrassed.)
- Omar She heard us and translates (smiling)
- Kathryn Nothing is safe now... (all the adults laugh)
- Shazia Yes – we say – have a drink of tea – and now she say it.

(FI - 20 January 2011)

This humorous interlude is significant as it highlights Raabia's attentiveness to both her languages and the pride her parents took in her efforts toward bilingual success.

There was a lot of laughter in this home. The adults laughed at their English and as they interacted with their children. Finally, there was also a lot of praise for Raabia – Omar and Shazia made a dozen direct compliments about their daughter's cleverness, literacy skills and social aptitude during the initial visits.

Before entering school

Raabia did not attend preschool or childcare before entering Kindergarten; she wasn't involved in any playgroup and only began learning English with her parents in the year leading up to beginning school. Raabia commented about her ability to speak English - 'my Dad speak English and I not speak English' (FI - 20 January 2011) but Omar rebuffed this statement after she left the room 'my daughter speak

English very well' adding 'I want to help her' (FI – 20 January 2011).



Figure 5.3 Raabia playing at home

The only contact that Raabia had with other children, prior to school, was when her parents took her to the local park or to the local swimming pool. Shazia had been very concerned about Raabia's ability to mix with other children, stating 'when we take her to a park, she can't play and she ask me to ask the children to play with her' (FI – 20 January 2011). However, over the months of park and pool visits these fears were somewhat alleviated as Omar and Shazia noticed the rate of progress that Raabia was making with her English – 'but now... she's good to make friends... yeah, very fast' (Shazia – FI – 20 January 2011). In the month prior to school beginning Raabia's parents were still concerned about how she would settle in to school and worried about how or whether she would make friends.

Omar You know, when Raabia start school I think... very difficult because I think ...the childs – they speak English, no problems about the letters, about the numbers... but Raabia maybe she embarrassed sometime, and shy, she don't understand what they say. (FI – 20 January 2011)

In an effort to prepare Raabia for school and to circumvent these concerns, Shazia and Omar, together, took on the role of teacher. For the Askari's this was a kind of double preparation, they wanted Raabia to be able to speak English and to have begun mastering literacy-based skills. At home, the Askari's made a number of resources available to Raabia to help her prepare for school, these included access to a computer, paper and pencils, notepads, colouring in books, story and picture

books and counting books. Shazia noted that she would ‘always try to buy for (Raabia)... these books. So she can learn.’ (FI – 13 August 2011). Shazia noted that Raabia was learning and was also able to learn on her own.

Shazia I think this was a good idea to get a DVD for her – she listens and ask me what does this word mean? ... and sometimes she don’t have to ask me because they show it and she learn by herself. (FI - 20 January 2011)



Figure 5.4 Raabia hard at work

Omar and Shazia’s teaching supported Raabia’s literacy learning through many activities and conversations, language learning and skills acquisition were interwoven. During the first family interview Raabia’s parents were observed scaffolding her English and literacy learning in four ways:

Often (Shazia) speaks in Arabic and then Raabia is able to name an object; sometimes Shazia speaks in Arabic and then says the word in English for Raabia to copy. Raabia counts stars for me, pointing to each star (up to 20, missing only the number 15; and has some idea of how to move on past 20; her mother and father help her with “21, 22, 23”. She appears to ignore them... then points and counts from one again... and recounts 21, 22, 23...). Throughout, her parents gave a lot of positive encouragement. (Researcher’s Notes – FI – 13 January 2011)

In a later conversation it was apparent that each member of this family was counted as a learner and a teacher.

Kathryn Oh these are ribbons for your hair

Raabia Yes. And blue and green and pink and yellow and orange and yellow and red and purple!

Shazia Oh she know all the colours (Omar speaks in Arabic) My husband say 'What is that colour?'

Omar Yes, I don't know them all – what is that one?

Shazia We say 'violet' (FI – 26 January 2011)

Both, Omar and Shazia acted as literacy scaffolders across two languages.

Kathryn Can you write your name?

Raabia Yes... I write

Shazia (Spells Raabia's name to remind her how to write it – she spells in Arabic)

Omar (Speaks in Arabic)

Shazia I know, I know – R (she laughs, and spells in English)

(FI – 26 January 2011)

They also taught Raabia book-based literacy skills as evidenced in her ability to use books written in English – knowing front and back and starting points for reading (ie moving from left to right), quite different from Arabic orientation.

Family expectations for the first year of school

In the weeks leading up to the beginning of school Omar and Shazia expressed a number of hopes and fears. They were positive about Raabia's abilities, as seen in earlier excerpts – 'she is clever' (Omar - FI – 20 January 2011); 'she is very social' (Omar – FI – 26 January 2011); 'she learn by herself' (Shazia – FI – 20 January 2011). Raabia, herself, was very excited about beginning school. During each visit Raabia showed me parts of her school uniform

Raabia (Raabia shows her uniform including hair elastics) But I am going in the school.... I am so so beautiful! (FI – 20 January 2011)

Also, during the first interview she presented me with her school letter:

Raabia shows me the first letter she has ever received – a letter from her school. It is a letter written to Raabia telling her about her first day of school... The letter has been very significant for Raabia – because it is her first and because it is about school. Raabia is very excited about beginning school, she has her uniform ready and has been to the school for five orientation visits. She liked seeing the school, she liked the activities... She had thought that she would go straight to school following orientation. (Researcher's Notes – FI – 13 January 2011)

Raabia was disappointed that school did not begin directly after Orientation and Omar related that she asked when school would begin every day:

Omar Yes, every day Raabia (says) 'What time I go?' (FI – 20 January 2011)

However Raabia's parents also had fears that her level of English would hold her back from making friends and that this would, in turn, constrain her progress in school.

Shazia You know, sometimes I am afraid (of) the other children, maybe because (they) don't understand her, ... maybe they don't like to make her friend, I don't know.....

Omar I think that the best way for Raabia to explain... err learn English language – (is) to make (Arabic word)

Shazia Friends

Omar Friends

Shazia (nodding) I hope that. (FI – 26 January 2011)

During the final family meeting, Shazia reflected on their hopes for their child doing well in school, as she explained 'parents want everything.... you know my daughter, I don't want to see her sad, so sometimes I have to think about that she can do it by herself' (FI – 13 August 2011).

Interpretive comment

From our first meeting, it was apparent that the Askari family were happy to be part of this study. All four members were present for the first three meetings in their home, with Omar taking time off from his studies to participate. They also showed a great deal of eagerness to share their personal stories revealing their love for their home land, its rich history and aspects of their lives.

It was also clear that Omar and Shazia were very keen to assist Raabia with language acquisition and to be helpful in her subsequent efforts in all areas at school. They spent time with her and took care to support her learning of languages (both English and Arabic) and other literate practices in the home. Omar and Shazia positioned themselves not only as teachers but also as learners and they undertook to do this in two languages. They provided access to a range of literacy-related, play resources, including picture, story and nursery rhyme books, counting and number books, note pads, pencils, scissors and glue; as well as access to the family computer, DVDs and puzzles. These resources were in either English and Arabic, spelling was conducted and understood in both languages, notepads which Raabia used showed evidence of writing in both languages.

Omar and Shazia exhibited clear understanding of school expectations for language and literacy (and numeracy) and worked toward preparing their daughter to be well equipped for school entry. Using Hill's (2010, 44-45) explanation of scaffolding children's language, the Askari's methods of language and literacy learning support were generally conducted across the two languages (using Arabic as the reference point) and included answering questions in Arabic and giving translation into English in order to expand and extend Raabia's statements in and knowledge of English; they also used 'self-talk' to extend Raabia's statements and to further give body to her, often, short utterances.

During the initial three visits, Raabia exhibited many signs of school readiness. She read picture books and used notepads and colouring-in books to colour and practice writing. On a number of occasions Raabia counted accurately in English

and knew her colours. On one occasion she read numbers in Arabic. However, Raabia needed a lot of scaffolding when she was asked questions and her parents translated the whole or parts of a number of the more complicated questions I asked. She was often only able to give rudimentary answers. Raabia used her social skills to make friends with me and shared her possessions as a way of maintaining our conversations. While her parents had been concerned that Raabia would find making friends difficult, in the months leading up to the beginning of school they had observed Raabia's growing skills in initiating friendships in social settings, for example during visits to the local park. Raabia also knew a number of nursery rhymes and was able to perform them with actions. Raabia was skilled in the use of the DVD player and used other technology, including the family's computer.

This consistent scaffolding of Raabia's learning of language and other literate practices reflected Omar's and Shazia's own educational background and their hopes for Raabia's education in the future. Their actions in preparing their daughter for Kindergarten also reflected their understandings of the more formalised educational context that Raabia was about to enter.

Movement to school: Orientation

Raabia was enrolled in Fern Wood Primary School and attended five Orientation sessions with her family (see Appendix I - FWPS Orientation Programme). Raabia's parents outlined the activity of those visits as recorded in my notes following our first meeting:

Shazia and Omar explain that on the first visit the whole family went in the evening for a sausage sizzle, the children played. The second school visit was during school hours and the family stayed together and heard about what school would be like. On the third visit they met in the classroom for a short time and then the parents were withdrawn for a period while the children had a class-based activity. On the final two visits the children were dropped off at the classroom for a shorter, then longer time, while the parents had a session together.

(The Askari's) felt that this was excellent preparation for their daughter and that she would be fine on the first day. The family think that Fern Wood School will be a fine school – they also mentioned that there are a number of Arabic students at the school and they are pleased about this as it will add a familiar aspect for Raabia, though they hope that Raabia will make many Australian friends.'

(Researcher's Notes, FI – 13 January 2011)

Through the Orientation programme, Omar and Shazia learned 'many things... like times to start and finish... and what they teach the kids' (Shazia – FI - 20 January 2011). Omar added that parents did not need to worry about their children 'there is safety there... and the child, he will be very enjoy his school because of many, many activities... they will be interested' (FI – 20 January 2011). When asked about what she thought about her initial experiences of school, Raabia's delight in her experience was evident in her response:

Raabia I like playing ball... My... my...

Omar Friends

Raabia My friends – she catch me and I catch her (FI – 20 January 2011)

On my second home visit Raabia brought her school hat for me to see, though she had already shown me her whole school uniform during the first visit. Her huge smile showed that she was immensely proud of her hat and that she would soon be going to school:

Raabia This I wear in the school – I'm going in the school...

(FI – 20 January 2011)

This joy and excitement was tempered by Omar and Shazia's concerns about Raabia settling in. During Orientation Omar approached a teacher to discuss these concerns regarding her language competence.

Omar I told... some teacher, my daughter, she speak Arabic the first language... she can speak English but as a second language. She told me – maybe to help her... special times to teach her.

(FI – 20 January 2011)

When I followed up on this they were unsure if this would take place and they had not received any information from the school about what these ‘special times’ would involve in either content or frequency.

This family’s story altered, as with each of the children’s stories, upon Raabia’s entry to school. At this point Mrs. Cooper’s voice is first heard. Mrs Cooper was Raabia’s Kindergarten teacher, with fifteen years’ experience teaching this grade and twenty years teaching experience overall. My first, and lasting, impression of Mrs Cooper was of an experienced, gentle teacher who had a great rapport with her class. So I was surprised by the strength of her memory of Raabia’s first experience of school, in the second teacher interview Mrs. Cooper reflected on her experience of Raabia’s Orientation visits.

OK..... I have to be honest, when Raabia came to Kindergarten Orientation she was quite non-compliant, she really didn’t want to be there. On two occasions she actually walked out of Orientation ... So our first thing about Raabia was about her behaviour not anything about her academics or anything like that or her ESL... but her behaviour.... ‘I don’t want to do that.’ ... So that was our main thing with her... when we were placing her we knew that she was ESL but we were also thinking about her behaviour.... Mum was very reluctant to (leave Raabia in the classroom) – she lurked around a lot and then once we got her out she did come back and look through the windows to see what was happening.... and my first impression was “here’s a spoilt little girl whose parents are very over protective of her” – that was my first impression of her in Orientation.

(TI – 6 June 2011)

Mrs Cooper's honesty was helpful, particularly because it was related in the context of an interview that reflected on the whole of the initial school experience. It also shed light on how children are selected for classes during the Orientation period. Finally, it sets the scene for the first weeks of school – transition.

Interpretive comment

In Mrs Cooper's statement it is interesting to note the labelling of Raabia as 'being ESL' and that it was not 'her ESL... but her behaviour' that marked her for special consideration as class lists were formed. It is also interesting to note what is lacking in this statement. There is no consideration of Raabia's language limitations raised by Omar, or how a lack of experience in school-styled contexts might affect Raabia as she entered school for the first time nor was there any consideration of the types of stresses that she may have been experiencing as she had her first taste of English-only interaction and was separated from her parents for the first time.

The contrast of Mrs Cooper's statement against the backdrop of the home visits is stark. The parents' optimism, pride and joy in their daughter and her growing English language competence and literacy skills in two languages had been evident. Raabia's excitement about school and making friends, her keenness to make friends with me, her delight in sharing her special possessions and drawings, all stand in some contrast to Mrs Cooper's narrative.

This complication in the story sets the scene for an interesting outcome... The stage is set for the next Act of this short play – Term One, Kindergarten!

Kindergarten: Term One

Mrs Cooper and Class KC

Mrs Jennifer Cooper - During the first teacher interview, Jennifer outlined that she had been a classroom teacher for twenty years, fifteen of those years teaching Kindergarten. Jennifer became a teacher after completing a three year diploma course at a regional Institute of Advanced Education in New South Wales (also

referred to as Teachers' College). During the fifteen years spent at Fern Wood, Jennifer had not undertaken any professional development to support her teaching of bilingual students. When asked about training she had undertaken that helped with teaching bilingual children, Jennifer noted 'it's purely experience... I think we did one component when I was at Teacher's College... it's learning on the job as you go'. When asked to reflect on her teaching practice, Jennifer stated that she relied on professional development, her own experience and the modelling of others as she formulated her own teaching style. Jennifer noted that she viewed literacy as socially constructed and important in every area of class work.

In Fern Wood, with around 400 students, Jennifer stated 'we've probably got about four or five ESL children in each class' (sic). When she began teaching her attitude was that she 'hoped for the best' and thought 'Oh you're one or two of a class of 25 so you're just going to have to come with us'. Later in the interview, Jennifer discussed how she had developed her understanding of how to include the 'ESL kids' in her class:

I include them a lot in the oral conversation and I like them to answer a question or to come up and show something just to see if they're understanding... I'm more inclined to lurk around their table and make sure that they understood the task or be there for a question then I'll go off and see the others... they do need you... I've learnt that their copying of other kids is absolutely fine, that's a fantastic strategy to use until you become an independent learner.

Use of resources - Jennifer used many visual aids during class to assist her students (including picture cards to assist children to form the sounds of letters correctly; daily timetable picture cards to remind children of each day's programme; visual reminder cards for good listening; charts for the weather and days of the week; colour charts; number charts) and when asked about this method used in her teaching she replied 'it's best practice really, they don't have to be ESL, there's lots of children that can have difficulties with language... so verbal and visual cues just make it easier'. She added that this method of teaching, leaning heavily on visual

cues, stemmed from her experience working in a class for students who had Receptive Language Disorder, Jennifer explained that 'they don't understand the processing of language'.

Other resources that Jennifer used in her planning for class included the Syllabus and its attached 'ESL component'. She also referred to the ESL teacher's reports that were prepared at the end of each semester, as well as weekly feedback. The school's ESL teacher used the class themes as a basis for her small group work.

Definition of Literacy - When asked about her definition of literacy, Jennifer responded:

Literacy, it's language; learning reading and writing all thrown in together... it's all totally combined and therefore when you teach it, it needs to be incorporated together... from as simple as knowing the orientation of a book; which is the front cover; to actually going through the processes of being able to read a book and write a two or three sentence story with some spelling and grammar and handwriting, it all comes under the literacy banner.

The latest professional development training that Jennifer, and the other Kindergarten teachers at her school, had participated in was 'Triple L' (see Chapter 1). The programme 'Language, Learning and Literacy' (known as L3 or Triple L) is a literacy-based Kindergarten intervention which specifically targets reading and writing during the first year of school. Jennifer's school decided to adopt this programme after they saw 'staggering literacy results' in other participating schools (Jennifer noted that prior to using Triple L, Fern Wood PS was generally aiming to bring all Kindergarten children to a PM level 5 reader, now it reached PM level 10 using Triple L). These schools 'were getting a lot of really good scores in their Basic Skills test and at that time our school was quite low... we were looking at the Year 3's and we thought, 'Well we have to target K, 1, 2 if we want the results'. In explanation of what Triple L did, Jennifer summarised 'it's bringing reading recovery strategies from a one-on-one into a classroom'. When reflecting on the

programme, Jennifer noted that it was originally designed for 'ESL kids... it seems like best practice'. The main element is 'small group instruction'. When reflecting on the benefits, Jennifer said 'I think, for the ESL kids, it works brilliantly... you can see exactly what they're doing and target their behaviours... or you can show them how... they can copy other's attempts too'. Jennifer also asserted that the benefit of being able to give immediate praise was very powerful. She added that because the groups are so small 'there's no pressure on the children'.

However, Jennifer reflected that there was increased downward pressure on teachers in the earlier grades due to the introduction of and increased emphasis on the results from NAPLAN testing (beginning in Year 3) "early intervention' is the quote of the last couple of years... early intervention, so that means Kindergarten... so it's there, it's always in the back of your mind'.

Class KC – Class KC consisted of 20 children, nine boys and eleven girls. Jennifer stated that at least seventeen of these had attended preschool. The class composition was largely formed during the Orientation sessions. Jennifer noted that classes were based on various groupings, noting that 'with the behaviour kids, we separate. With the ESL kids, we separate; and with the lower functioning kids, we separate because it's too hard to have them all together' (TI – 6 June 2011). In 2011, Jennifer's class had four children classified as needing assistance from the ESL teacher, and Raabia was one of two children who had gained a place in a small group that was removed once a week for specialist assistance, this session was 45 minutes in length (this assistance lasted only fifteen weeks).

Raabia - Against this backdrop, I asked Jennifer about her contact with Raabia and her family. She said '(Raabia's) parents are very interested... her Dad has been up numerous times... he wanted to know how he could help at home'. So responding to Omar's request Jennifer provided a pack of numeral cards, as well as the usual sight word lists and home readers that the rest of the class also had. Jennifer stated – 'I gave them a packet of 0-10 numeral cards because she can count but she can't identify the numbers yet, I thought, "that's something".'

(Note: Unless stated, all excerpts in this section were taken from TI – 28 February 2011)

Interpretive comment

Jennifer was a highly competent and skilful teacher. In my reflections after the first classroom observation, I wrote ‘she is a brilliant teacher’ and again ‘she is an amazing teacher’; and ‘she was very good with classroom management’ (Researcher’s Reflections - CO – 9 February 2011). Her classroom was calm and her students seemed focused and appeared to enjoy being in her class. Students received a lot of positive feedback. When asked to reflect on her teaching practice, Jennifer was able to encapsulate her methods and outline her philosophical stance. She noted that she leant heavily on her experience and the modelling of others to create her own teaching style.

Literacy was viewed as being socially constructed and important in every area of class work. In taking up the use of Triple L in her classroom, Jennifer was aware of the downward pressure stemming from the NAPLAN Testing (beginning in Year 3), however instead of viewing the new programme as adding pressure to the children to perform, she highlighted the extra pressures it placed on teachers to balance the greater workload and to continue making the classroom a place of learning with fun.

Jennifer’s first insights of Raabia were restricted to her first encounters at Orientation. She referred to her initial response about Raabia again when she noted how classes were formed. In this statement Jennifer again suggested that bilingual children were placed in classes in the same way that ‘lower functioning children’ and ‘the behaviour kids’ were. This view of bilingual children who have additional linguistic and literate practices as being in deficit was highlighted. Jennifer also stated that very early in the school year she began to forge a relationship with Omar, Raabia’s father. She described his repeated visits with her and his keenness to assist Raabia. It is interesting to note the specific extra resource offered (numeral cards) were something that the family already

possessed (in book form) and used prior to school. It is also interesting to note that it was Omar's persistence in visiting with Jennifer that she understood to be a mark of the family's interest in Raabia's education and was the basis for the beginning of a relationship between school and home.

Classroom Observations

During the first school term of 2011, I spent six two-hour morning sessions (from 9.00am to 11.00am) with Mrs Cooper and her Kindergarten class, KC. I observed the literacy block, run each day, Monday to Thursday. On the first morning the letters 's', 'm' and 'a' with pictures of a child's mouth saying the letter' were shown on the teacher's whiteboard at the mat area (CO – 9 February 2011). Under the main writing board (in front of the mat area) were signs to show the timetable for the day. At each visit I sat at the Teacher's desk, close to the front of the classroom but behind and to the side of the children when they sat on the mat, this gave me an unhindered view of the room (see Classroom layout at Figure 5.5; researcher's position indicated by red star).

The student desks were divided into four groups to allow for small group work. Each child had their name printed on a card attached to their desk, there were pencils for shared use on each set of desks and each child had an alphabet card with some sight words listed (including – I, am, a, in, the, and). Around the walls of the classroom were a colour chart; artwork created by the children; weather chart and calendar; alphabet and number cards.

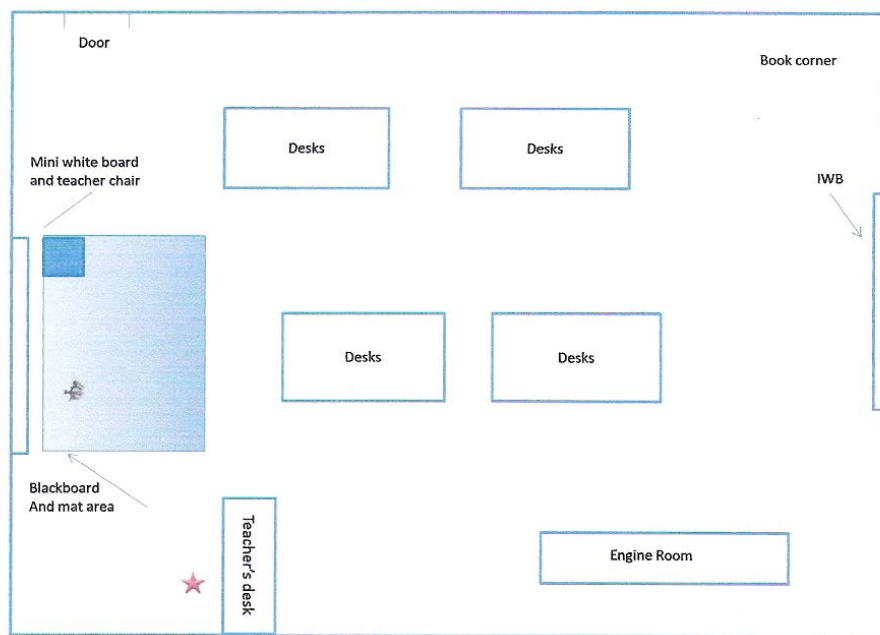


Figure 5.5 Classroom layout

The Literacy Block routine in Mrs Cooper’s classroom was closely followed each week I attended. Upon arrival the class sat on the mat. Without exception, the class was quiet and they sat down quickly and without fuss, even in the second week of Kindergarten these children clearly knew the routine and followed it.

During my visits Mrs Cooper often selected Raabia to answer questions or to participate in class activity. This teacher was quick to praise her students and used very successful classroom management strategies to encourage the children to be active and attentive listeners and learners.

(A full account of the six classroom observations is given in Appendix J.)

Synopsis of Observations

During Roll Call in the first Observation, I noted that Raabia was ‘hesitant and softly spoken’, she sat alone on the mat. Her normally outgoing, friendly behaviour had vanished. Mrs Cooper called on Raabia to answer a number of questions including to give the number of days in the week. The class had recited the day names and had counted them off on their fingers, however when called on to state the number of days in a week Raabia had responded ‘four’. Mrs Cooper praised Raabia

for answering and then went on to correct the answer. Later in this introductory session the students were asked to put up their hands if they had an 'a' (the letter of the day) in their name. Raabia put up her hand but was not noticed, upon putting her hand down the teacher called on her, saying 'Raabia, you have an 'a' in your name'. Throughout this session Raabia was silent, she appeared withdrawn.

Mrs Cooper carefully outlined the six activities for the morning and then placed the children in groups of three or four. These groups were organised using guidance from the outcomes of the Best Start assessment. Each group began with a different activity and moved, clockwise, around the room, spending ten minutes on each. Even as early as Week 3 (the second week of Kindergarten), the groups were able to undertake the tasks with minimal supervision. After each ten minute block the teacher asked the children to move to the next activity. Children had been instructed not to interrupt the teacher, who sat in what was known as the Engine Room¹ working with one small group at a time. Over the six observed sessions in Term 1 the make-up of the small groups altered, as Mrs Cooper explained to the children in Week 4 – 'We change groups because people change'. This simple explanation appeared to overcome any doubts the children may have had over change in their groups.

Engine Room– The group in the Engine Room read with Mrs Cooper and undertook some writing practice. When Raabia's group (comprised of Raabia, Indira and Sam) came to their third activity they sat at the desk across from the teacher. Raabia seemed distracted and looked around the room. The teacher read the reader² to the three children, showing the pictures and directing the children's attention to points of interest. Then she handed a copy of the book to each child. She showed

¹ Used in the Triple L program, the Engine Room is where the teacher works with small groups of 2, 3 or 4 students for 10 minute periods. During this time the teacher models and guides several activities including reading, practicing site words and writing.

² Basal Reader - a short text purposively constructed for reading instruction with emergent readers. These texts have a few high-frequency words used repeatedly. The story line is simple and there is a direct match between text and illustrations. Other print aspects are used to assist the reader: large spaces between words, print is regular and carefully separated from illustrations. School readers are levelled to indicate reader's ability level.

the children how to point to the words as they read, assisting Raabia and Sam to do this. By page four Raabia was pointing to the words as they read.

In the next segment of their work together, identifying the letters learnt so far, Raabia checked the child beside her before pointing to the letter that the teacher asked for. This activity was repeated using the class' sight words. When the teacher asked the children to point to the word 'I' Raabia called out 'I found it!', however she was not pointing to the correct word. Indira, next to her, showed her the correct word and she pointed to it.

This initial observation showed Raabia to be quite different from how she had presented during our home visits. In the classroom she was quiet and reserved, occasionally strident, always used English, even with the toys she played with. Her unbridled home-confidence seemed to have disappeared and she consistently sat alone when on the mat. During activities, particularly in the Engine Room, Raabia appeared unsure of herself and regularly looked to her neighbour to show her what to do.

Picture of a learner

Establishing her social identity - The Engine Room and class time in the mat area continued to highlight Raabia's early isolation. Despite numerous occasions during each observation where Mrs Cooper encouraged or complimented Raabia for her input, the young girl continued to sit alone on the mat and she continued to look to her neighbour, Indira, for answers during Engine Room activities. This continued each week until the final week in the first term where she appeared more accepted socially. However, it was also noteworthy that while Raabia often sat alone during class time, she appeared well accepted during small group time. Here she was observed to consistently chat with the two or three other children in her group.

Raabia also began to establish herself socially. She had been labelled, during Orientation, as a 'behaviour problem' and placed in her class on this basis. Her teacher noted that some of the children found her 'bossy' but Raabia also showed a compassionate nature when dealing with other children during the observational

sessions. This was evident in how Raabia approached Mrs Cooper on behalf of a child who was nervous about interrupting during group time, but needed to go to the toilet. By the end of term, Raabia was observed to work well, particularly in small groups, playing or packing up after an activity and she was able to undertake the set tasks without disruption.

Matching literacy from home to school: growing new literate practices - In the second observational period Raabia's behaviour indicated that she was able to draw on her home literate practice to engage in the classroom activity. When sitting in the Reading Corner Raabia noticed a book that was familiar to her. The book was a 'Bananas in Pyjamas' book, popular with young children in Australia. Raabia's family had these DVDs at home. The following observation reflects this recognition and familiarity.

She lay down on the floor and looked at every page, pointing to the pictures and talking to herself as she did so. She reread the book in this way several times and the teacher, noticing her continued quiet reading commended her – 'I love the way you're reading' she said to Raabia from the Engine Room. (CO – 16 February 2011)

From home observations, photos taken and conversations it was apparent that reading was an important aspect of family life. This school observation showed how Raabia employed this familiar activity and her knowledge of popular (Australian) culture to undertake school activity. This occurred twice more during class observations.

Speaking up - Over the six observations Raabia consistently showed a willingness to answer questions during class time on the mat. Regardless of whether Raabia was chosen to answer a question or whether her answers were correct, Raabia's hand consistently went up as the teacher called for answers. During the second classroom observation (CO – 16 February 2011) I noted:

The teacher showed a number of pictures and asked the children to select the ones that began with 'f'. Raabia was selected and she chose

and named a picture of an apple. 'Good girl – you named the apple but it doesn't start with 'f'... /f/ Look at my mouth... /f/... I'll show you one' (the teacher pointed to a picture of fire) – Raabia responded 'fire'. Her voice was firm and she smiled at the teacher.

In the final week of observations Raabia and Indira were the first children to be called on to read the 26 letters and give their sounds. The girls worked together and were able to produce all but two sounds (Raabia had difficulty with a third sound). The next pair of students needed assistance with 7 sounds and the third pair required assistance with almost half of the sounds. Throughout the term Raabia's knowledge of the alphabet had developed quickly, despite an early apparent lack of confidence.

Assessment at the end of Term 1 – On the final day for observations, Mrs Cooper reminded the children that they were to have a test in class that day, it was a two sentence dictation. At this the children were very excited, as they had been told that they could sit in special seats, including the teacher's chair and the reading chair in the book corner. I recorded:

Mrs Cooper reminds the children that there is no wrong way to try to write – but they can ...? – She pauses and allows the children to finish her sentence - the children offer that they can use their sounds (CO).

The class then prepared for the test by sounding out an unrelated word and writing it on the teacher's whiteboard.

Next Mrs Cooper told the children the story that they were to write for their test:

'I have a big dog at home. Today I am going to take him to school.'

Mrs Cooper noted 'It's a long story but we're just going to have a go!' (CO).

Mrs Cooper then said the first word – assisting Raabia to find the place to begin (she still had trouble with beginning on the left side of the page consistently - Arabic and English were perhaps still being mixed up).

Raabia wrote: I fua a b dog to m. ot I am go to tk m to sl. (CO) (Figure 5.5)

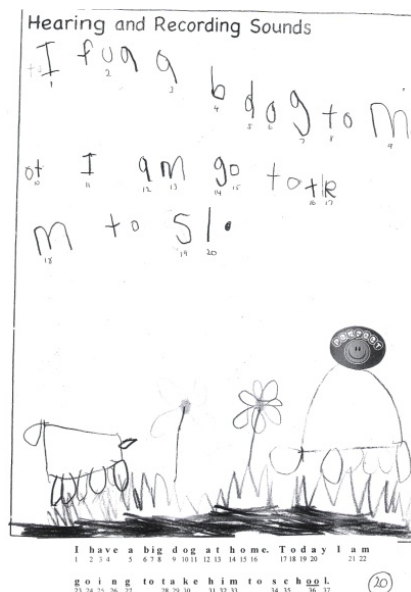


Figure 5.6 Raabia's Term 1 Dictation (CO – 6 April 2011)

(A full account of the classroom observations can be found at Appendix J.)

Reflections on transition to school

After the classroom observations were completed a final interview was held with Mrs Cooper and then with Raabia and her family. During these two interviews all the participants were asked to reflect on their experience of the first term of school and on their understanding of Raabia's transition to school.

The view from school

Social Success - Mrs Cooper and Class KC

Jennifer's opening remarks about Raabia (see: Kindergarten Term One) highlighted two characteristics of this teacher – she was candid and she was willing to accept a child she was concerned about and still teach without discrimination. Jennifer acknowledged openly that her first impressions were strong but quickly went on to explain what happened:

there were a few different (issues)... But it didn't take long, I think it was just looking at all the other kids and seeing what they were doing and that they were getting praise and that they were getting stars... she's an intelligent little girl, so that was enough for her to go – 'Oh I want that too.'... So it was that behaviour/reward thing... And then she flipped over, and she was an absolutely gorgeous little girl and has been ever since. And behaviour is not an issue whatsoever. She's absolutely gorgeous.

(TI – 6 June 2012)

Socially, it appeared to take Raabia some time to find her place. In the early weeks, Jennifer recalled the children in Class KC complaining that Raabia 'bossed' them. Jennifer commented that this may have been due to her lack of interaction with children prior to school and compounded by her lack of competence in English, she noted

(Raabia's) very confident in her language even though it's ESL... but she had to learn ... if you keep saying 'but I want it, but I want it' louder and louder it's not going to make you get it.... but probably six weeks in she was quick to catch on and now half way through the year she's very popular.

(TI – 6 June 2012)

Language - Best Start and ESL Assessment

Jennifer reflected on Raabia's Best Start outcomes,

she would have got zeros in Best Start for everything... I had her down as knowing no sounds, didn't even attempt rhyming – there were a lot of 'n's for non-attempt... she just didn't have any idea what to do.... She didn't pick up on any visual clues in the story on that particular day. That's not to say that she wouldn't another time...' (TI – 6 June 2011)

Literacy recording and analysis sheet

Name: _____

Reading texts		Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5	Q.6	Overall continuum n
N	0	N	0	N	0	N	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	

d-d (d-d)

Phonics		Q.7	Q.8	Q.9	Q.10	Overall continuum n
N	0	N	0	N	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	
2	2	2	2	2	2	
3	3	3	3	3	3	

Phonemic awareness		Rhyme awareness		Hearing initial sounds		Overall continuum n	
Q.11	Q.12	Q.13	Q.14	Q.15	Q.16	Q.17	
N	N	N	N	N	N	N	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	

Concepts about print		Q.18	Q.19	Q.20	Q.21	Q.22	Q.23	Q.24	Overall continuum n
N	0	N	0	N	0	N	0	N	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	

Comprehension		Q.25	Q.26	Q.27	Q.28	Overall continuum n
N	0	N	0	N	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	
2	2	2	2	2	2	
3	3	3	3	3	3	

Aspects of speaking		Q.29	Q.30	Q.31	Q.32	Overall continuum n
N	0	N	0	N	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	
2	2	2	2	2	2	
3	3	3	3	3	3	

ESL

Aspects of writing		Q.33	Q.34	Q.35	Q.36	Overall continuum n
N	0	N	0	N	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	
2	2	2	2	2	2	
3	3	3	3	3	3	

Figure 5.7 Raabia's Best Start Analysis Sheet

Following this assessment on the first day of school, Raabia was also assessed for ESL assistance and she was 'deemed as a little bit more in need than some of the other kids. So for Term 1 and for this term she received ... 45 minutes a week' (TI – 6 June 2011), this weekly block with the ESL teacher was a group session. The group work centred on oral work 'between the kids', playing games and spending time explaining and describing artefacts or activities, to improve their comprehension and oral ability in class. However after only two terms Jennifer was informed that new arrivals at the school would be taking Raabia's ESL placement because 'they are more needy than her and so they jump the cue and they go up. So she'll be off the ESL programme... it boils down to funding' (TI – 6 June 2012). Jennifer went on to reflect that these new students were 'not speaking as well as she is or not learning as well, so they become the priority' (TI – 6 June 2012).

When asked about Raabia's current perceived language needs, Jennifer responded that her most pressing issue was 'her grammar. Her sounds are fantastic. Her

visual knowledge of words, like sight words, are terrific... it's just getting that grammar and the words in sequence' (TI – 6 June 2012).

Academic achievement

When Jennifer reflected on Raabia's first term of school and her academic achievement she described a huge change. At the beginning of school she had 'the impression that (Raabia) didn't know any (sounds), according to Best Start she didn't anyway'. Jennifer noted several times in the final interview that Raabia's parents had worked hard with Raabia on learning sounds, sight words and practicing reading every day – '(Raabia) tells me, 'I practice them every day with my Mamma''. She also noted that she gave the family laminated alphabet cards and

I actually showed them to say /a/ /b/ /c/ not 'a' 'b' 'c' – we don't want that we want the sounds, and they took that on board and they have done it at home, every day... and that's why she can sound and blend CVC words'.

Reflecting on Term 1, Raabia's progress with learning sight words was described as 'absolutely phenomenal'; her recall for writing, 'very good'; her confidence in writing and reading activities 'was fantastic'; and 'according to Best Start continuum in literacy she's Level 5 reading, she's got all her sounds and all her sight words'.

Jennifer added that, despite these shining outcomes in her end of term assessments, and while Raabia's ability to count and work in addition was very good, where number stories were used 'that all becomes a bit too much because there are too many words... but that'll settle'. It was clear that there continued to be a gap in comprehension, even though the mechanics of reading had been learned.

Transition

Transition for Raabia was 'a little bit more bumpy (than for some of the other children) because of the expectations around behaviour'. Jennifer's concerns with Raabia's behaviour were also reflected in her concern for Raabia's lack of

understanding of the school routines. Jennifer noted 'there were those things that she wasn't used to... the expectations of behaviour and routines and all the rules... but once it was consistent and she saw that this is how it happened, it didn't take her long'. Jennifer also noted that the visual aids to classroom routine 'really helped' Raabia. When the routine of school was settled, Jennifer stated that Raabia was 'very much on track' and she was 'progressing along the Best Start continuum as your average child should be, average English speaker should be'.

When summarising her thoughts and experiences of Raabia's transition to school, Jennifer stated, 'I see a lot more of the father, every day I see him. And every day he will ask – 'How is Raabia today? Is she good?' And I think – 'yeah, she is. She is very good and she is doing very well.'

Interpretive comment

Having had contact with Raabia in her home over the three weeks leading up to the beginning of school I was surprised by her Best Start outcomes. This gregarious child who was learning some letters and numbers in two languages, who could spell and sound her name in two languages and who had demonstrated a number of literacy skills around reading and the use of books had not been able to perform at all during the Kindergarten entry assessment. From Jennifer's interviews and the classroom observations, Raabia's first weeks of school were characterised by her silence, an amount of isolation that included sitting alone in the mat area of class, uncertainty about new routines and a lack of comprehension.

Raabia was only given one 45 minute group session with the ESL teacher weekly and this assistance ceased at the end of Term 2, due to the arrival of new children who were deemed to need assistance more than Raabia, not necessarily because her need was satisfied. This was despite Raabia's lack of comprehension during the Best Start assessment, her score of zero for almost every Literacy assessment area, her parent's request for language assistance and the recognition that she would need ESL assistance following an ESL assessment. It was interesting to note that

Jennifer did not refer to Raabia's first language competence at all during our interviews.

When considering Raabia's overall transition to school, perhaps Jennifer's description of 'bumpy' is apt. However, Raabia's own determination and hard work with her parents proved strong allies and Jennifer was quick to praise Raabia and her parents for their daily efforts to work on areas of literacy that were, in the school context, deemed to be inadequate. Jennifer was also quick to praise Raabia for her ability to learn how to interact in the school context.

The view from home – the final family interview

Upon re-entering Raabia's home I was immediately confronted by a girl who had grown up considerably since I had last seen her in class or been to her home. As had been the case in January, she was pleased to have a visitor and had been looking forward to my visit, waiting in the lounge room for me to arrive.

Academic performance and language competence

A Surprising Gift - As I entered the lounge room I gave Raabia a small book, a gift I had hoped would simply help to rekindle our friendship. In my reflections I noted, 'I had meant each book to simply be a gift not an added artefact. But here is a child who, when given a book, sits straight down and reads'. I had not planned to hear the child participants read nor had I envisaged or prepared any sort of assessment, however before I could sit down Raabia had begun to read the book aloud. Raabia read everything, even the back cover.

Raabia's enjoyment of the activity was obvious. She sounded out 18 of the 178 words in the text and she generally remembered words that she had previously sounded out. It was, then, sobering to hear Raabia's answer to the question I asked following her reading about whether she liked being a reader:

Raabia I love this story... I love the story of the dad.

Raabia was able to successfully decode the whole story (about a baby dinosaur) however it was clear that she was not able to express her comprehension of the

story in English and that she had not understood my question. She was, however, keen to answer questions about her reading strategies:

Kathryn How do you know all the hard words, Raabia?

Raabia Uhm, I knowed this was baby because in Friday Mrs Cooper wrote about baby. And when I did ... when I spell it there was no bossy 'e' but it was a copycat 'y' and I know it was baby.

Kathryn What about 'dinosaur' – how did you know it was dinosaur?

Raabia Because it starts with the letter 'd' and because this was the picture about the dinosaur and this was the letter.

Kathryn Ah it gave you a hint...

Shazia Yeah sometimes the picture help her to... to predict what the word is.

Raabia understood how to sound out words and she was looking to make meaning by using words that made sense when she was unsure of the actual word used. She was also able to self-correct and she began to read more fluently as she continued through the book. While from the interview above it was evident that Raabia had also learned grammatical rules, the use of pictorial and alpha clues also assisted her with decoding the new text. It was also clear that Shazia was conscious that Raabia needed more than reading strategies, Shazia's scaffolding of Raabia was not limited to encouragement to 'spell it' (meaning sound the word out), she also gave visual clues as to meaning as Raabia read and when she indicated that she had not fully understood the text.

Raabia Are you /l//o//s//t/... lost?

Shazia (Raabia looks at her mother) Are you lost? (Shazia raises her hands, palms upward – indicating a question.)

As if to highlight her joy of reading, once Raabia had answered a couple of questions about her new book she announced – 'I'll read it again' – then she walked off to a comfortable chair reading, ignoring the adults, enjoying the task.

With pride Shazia announced that Raabia had already read 'sixty home readers ... and she doesn't like me to help her! Sometimes, if she can't read the word, she

comes to ask me'. However, both Shazia and Raabia repeated that the work of learning to read was completed by Raabia.

Raabia I just did it but (Mummy) helped me a little bit.

Shazia Just I make for her, like a test. But she did it herself. She did very well.

The bidirectionality of learning and teaching, alluded to in the January visits, was still in evidence as Shazia added 'many words I learn from (Raabia)' during this initial period at school. When Raabia had had her first loose tooth 'she say – Mum it's wobbling! (Shazia shows the action)... I don't know this word, I learn it from her!'

While comprehension of English did appear to be a continuing concern, Raabia's language acquisition was a source of family pride. In the initial family conversations Raabia had also demonstrated a level of bilingual sophistication in being able to hold a conversation in English while listening to her parents speaking in Arabic, and then translating (see At Home). This had surprised me, however in the final interview Raabia again demonstrated a level of language sophistication in her ability to converse in English. During the final home visit Raabia and I spent time completing a jigsaw puzzle, we talked as we worked. Raabia was able to switch between talk about jigsaw pieces and answering questions about schooling. (Jigsaw related talk is in italics)

Kathryn And could you understand everything at school? Was it hard? *Oh look at that one...*

Raabia *Yes – pass it here* What hard? I don't understand what you mean.

Kathryn Could you understand what Mrs Cooper said at school?

Raabia Yes.

Kathryn *Can you see an edge piece?*

Raabia *No – that doesn't go there...* No – we did our reading groups for a long time and I am not getting any help... I can do everything all by myself.

Home literate practice - Omar and Shazia had worked extensively on Raabia's literacy skills prior to school and when Shazia reflected on Raabia's experience of

learning during the first weeks of school she noted, 'they teach her about the letters. There is no problem because she had a background of them'. Later in the visit Shazia added that they were continuing to buy educational books for Raabia, 'I always try to buy for her... these books. So she can learn. PLAY and learn'. While in our initial visits Raabia had used story books, alphabet and number workbooks and number cards to learn (English language) vocabulary, she was now able to demonstrate how she could use them to practice her literacy (and numeracy) skills. Later, as Raabia sat writing her name in her notepad, her mother repeated, 'I like to buy her all these books. So she have funny and learn too'.

When asked about Raabia's retention of her first language, Arabic, Shazia stated that 'it's still as it was... but sometimes she (says) a whole Arabic sentence, she use one word or two words in English... but she is doing very well'. Shazia went on to explain that Raabia had not begun learning to read and write Arabic yet as 'I don't want her to be confused between them. Maybe next year.' Omar and Shazia were adamant that their daughter should not worry about losing her home language and that they had decided that once her English was well established Shazia 'will try to help her to learn the Arabic letter and number'. They had also decided not to send her to a Community Language School as this was an activity that Shazia felt happy to undertake.

Being at school – Academically, Raabia had performed well in the first term of school and her parents' pride in her achievements was evident. Shazia related how Mrs Cooper had spoken to her in a recent school visit – "'Raabia in the top of the class! So don't worry about her, she feels confident. She's never shy, don't worry about her.'" – So I feel very happy now!' Clearly, from Shazia's earlier statement related to their literacy preparation for school ('she had a background of them' – reading and writing) the Askari's were not concerned about how Raabia would be able to perform in school, despite English being the teaching medium. Raabia added that she had 'reading groups for a long time' but that she was now 'not getting any help... I can do it all by myself!'.

When I asked Shazia about Raabia's school language assistance, she stated she did not know of any ESL assistance being given.

Kathryn Shazia, did Raabia have any help from the English language teacher?
 ESL teacher?

Shazia Uhm... I'm not sure.... no, never... Nobody ask me....

Social success

As noted in earlier sections, there had been a great deal of excitement in the Askari household prior to school, as Raabia had looked forward to meeting other children, especially playing with them and having friends. When reflecting on the initial weeks of school, Shazia said 'at the beginning... I was worry about her. I felt that maybe she will be shy. She didn't understand what they say. She couldn't make friends'. In fact, making friends and social inclusion had been the greatest concern for Omar and Shazia in the three prior-to-school home visits. When asked if the early days of school were hard in any way she responded, 'no never... she was very happy. Every day she went to school and come back, she is very happy'. Even the first day of school had been a positive day, when the family had arrived to pick Raabia up, Shazia noted, 'she doesn't like to come with me. She said, "Oh Mummy, I didn't finish my picture, let me finish it..." So I did'. Shazia's own experience was that 'it was hard for me' – she missed Raabia's company and worried about her but Shazia added 'now it's ok'.

Later in our conversation, Shazia added that Raabia had had times when she had not always understood her friends, saying

sometimes she said – 'Mummy I can't understand my friends'..... but I say 'that's ok, just listen to them and if you didn't understand, ask them what's that mean?... You can use your hand to explain what you need to do or you can move'. I encouraged her, I feel a little bit sad but I say she will do that and... she can do that! I can see that she can open any conversation with any person she see. And she is talking very, very well. She can understand everything.

This determinedly positive attitude is reflected in Raabia's own explanation of her inclusion in class. When asked about her special friends she confidently replied:

Raabia I already told you I have special friends.

Kathryn Can you tell me who they are?

Raabia Yep – Marri, Kellie, Sandy, Angela, Tamara, Indira, Elissa, ME – I love myself.

Transition to school

The Askari's positive outlook is reflected in their responses to Raabia's transition to school. While they had voiced a number of concerns centring on Raabia's social success at school, they had also repeatedly stated that she would be able to conquer any hurdles that she experienced. Omar and Shazia had not voiced any concerns about Raabia's academic success, though they had worried about her competence with English. When asked to summarise her thoughts about what she liked about Raabia's new school, Shazia responded

Hmmmmmm..... Everything! Yeah! Of course the teaching... they teach in very nice way. They look like they play but they teach at the same time! They make the students like school... because they play, they teach with the playing therefore they like school too much. Also, in their school, they have many, many activities.

When asked about any negative aspects to Raabia's time at school, Shazia responded emphatically, 'No, no, I can't remember a time... it is never happened... no. The opposite!'. Later, when reflecting on Raabia's enjoyment of the beginning of school, Shazia stated, 'I am sure that she is very happy..... Sometimes she doesn't like the weekend. She say "I want to go to school." Yeah (she laughs) she have lots of fun there'.

Raabia's reflections on school were activity and friend based. When asked about the best part of school she stated that 'play time' was her favourite activity and she liked to spend this time drawing 'something for my Mum' (note: 2011 was an

unusually wet year in NSW and so many days' play times were spent inside). As noted previously, Raabia's friends were important to her school experience, she frequently took toys to share with the children in her class and she liked group work in class. A highlight of school, for Raabia, had been her inclusion in out of school activities. Of particular importance on the day of the final visit was a recent party that Raabia had attended. At Indira's birthday party all the children had received a small gift, Raabia had received a jigsaw puzzle. This was still a cause of great excitement as she showed and then played with her puzzle, then described her favourite activity at the party – 'I goed down the big slide – look how big it is (she runs across the room to show how big the slide was)... and we have a cupcake and we eat it!'. The other main school highlight for Raabia was her teacher, Shazia stated,

Shazia She like her too much! After each holiday she say 'Mummy, I want to give a present for my teacher'.

Raabia And I bought her flowers.

Shazia Yeah! Sometimes she sit there and (says) 'Listen to me, I am Mrs Cooper'. She make a copy from Mrs Cooper, she look like her, she talk the same. She like to be Mrs Cooper!

Interpretive comment

The transition to school for Raabia had clearly had an enormous impact on the Askari family. In a very short period, Raabia's knowledge of English had grown considerably and she was, as her parents predicted, becoming a teacher in her family. She had acknowledged successes in both academic and social areas. At home her confidence was almost visible, as it had been prior to beginning school and Raabia and her parents were very happy with all aspects of her transition experience.

An unusual aspect of this final home visit was that Shazia was unaware that her daughter had received any ESL assistance in school. So that she neither knew of her daughter's assistance nor the removal of that assistance.

However, the overriding message of this visit seemed to be Raabia's love of school and learning – completing her home reader homework each night, buying gifts for her teacher after holidays, playing 'schools' at home where she pretended to be Mrs Cooper and, finally, her statement about her participation in reading groups – 'I can do it all by myself'.

Summary of Raabia's story

This chapter is broken into three major sections, each tells a family narrative of one of the child-participant's in this research project. The first family narrative tells the story of Raabia Askari and her transition from home to school. This narrative includes three prior-to-school family conversations which were followed by an interview with Raabia's Kindergarten teacher, six classroom observations and a follow-up interview with Raabia's teacher; there was then a final family conversation. This summary highlights the main themes apparent in the Askari's narrative of transition.

Identity construction: Soon after entering the Askari's home for the first time the conversation, led by Omar, turned to their identity as members of a Middle Eastern nation, which he described as an ancient civilisation, a nation striving for peace and prosperity, that values free education for all. Across our conversations, Omar and Shazia revealed their family identity through their talk and used artefacts to explain further, including showing the Middle Eastern TV news channel which they watch and sharing family photos of recent experiences; and by sharing educational books and other resources they were using with Raabia in order to prepare her for school. Explaining national and historic identity was important to the Askari family. Omar, particularly, appeared keen to establish their family's identity as embedded in their national identity throughout our initial conversations.

Raabia quickly established her identity in the home conversations as an outgoing, friendly child who was quick to enter into conversation and was eager to practice her English. She showed herself to be confident and was clearly excited about her upcoming school start. Omar and Shazia, while holding some concerns about

Raabia's language proficiency, were confident about Raabia's ability to succeed in the new school context.

All three family members identified themselves as learners and teachers as they discussed their acquisition of English. Raabia was described as teaching her parents and she noted that she would be able to teach her parents more once she had begun school.

In the final family conversation, Shazia recounted Raabia's reluctance to leave school on the first day of school; she also noted that Raabia was sometimes disappointed that there was no school on weekends. So Raabia and her family perceived and recalled the transition period in very positive terms. However, Raabia's transition to school was described by her teacher as 'bumpy'. During Orientation, Raabia was labelled by the Kindergarten teachers as a 'behaviour problem' and her class placement was based on her perceived behavioural issues. She was also labelled as 'being ESL', being 'wilful' and 'spoilt'. In class, her outgoing nature was initially interpreted as bossiness by the other children and during this period Raabia was often observed to be silent and alone in class.

However, the final teacher interview reflected a change in perceived school identity for this girl by the end of this transition period. Mrs Cooper described Raabia's academic achievements as 'fantastic', 'absolutely phenomenal', 'very much on track' (with the English first students). She was noted as being a friendly girl who had established herself in the first half year of school as a quick learner and a hard worker. While in the final family conversation, Shazia reflected that the teacher had described Raabia as being 'at the top of her class' and Raabia described herself at school as having special friends and being a reader.

These changes are significant, Raabia demonstrated that she was able to negotiate the many facets of her identity in the classroom through:

- her academic efforts including literacy learning
- by consistently caring for the children around her
- by sharing her possessions with her classmates

- she worked with her parents at home to learn letters, sounds, sight words, numerals and she practiced reading daily
- Raabia also developed quickly as a language learner
- she succeeded in being able to make friends

These final two items were those that Raabia's parents had been concerned about prior-to-school. Omar also helped to position Raabia as a keen learner in the classroom by showing his interest in her education on a daily basis as he consistently approached her teacher.

Capital and deficit: Recognising the capital that a child brings into school, whether cultural or linguistic, was shown in the Literature Review as vital to that child's success at school both in the transition period and longer term (Drury, 2007; Feiler, 2005; Gonzalez et al, 2005; Thomson, 2002).

For Raabia, whose parents both hold tertiary qualifications and have a very positive view of education and of their daughter's ability to succeed academically at school, her capital included emergent bilingual skills in English and Arabic as well as numerous literacy skills stemming from her family's home literate practices. The Askari family actively took up the challenge of preparing Raabia for entry to school. Their activities in the home included:

- Providing reading and writing resources (pens, pencils, paper, scissors, etc)
- Reading, writing and drawing with Raabia
- Teaching Raabia how to write her name in English and spell her name in both languages
- English language story, nursery rhyme and number books
- DVDs
- Puzzles and games
- Providing access to a computer
- The family spent time conversing in English.

Omar and Shazia also encouraged a view that each of them (the parents and child) was both a learner and a teacher.

During the initial family conversations, Omar and Shazia pointed out numerous times that their daughter would be successful at school. They perceived their daughter as having cultural and linguistic capital that would sustain her through the transition period and position her for future success. Raabia's statements indicated that she too saw herself as able to succeed at school. Raabia also showed that she had a degree of linguistic sophistication as she was able to participate in conversations that required activity on more than one level or in more than one language.

However, at school the teachers and children did not have the same initial understanding of Raabia. Mrs Cooper's first impression of Raabia was set in terms of deficit. As noted in the previous section, Raabia was initially labelled as 'a behaviour problem' and as acting in a defiant manner in the classroom as she openly refused to follow the teacher's instructions. However, at no point were the Askari's approached to inquire about Raabia's language accomplishments, nor was the ESL assistance given discussed with Raabia's parents.

While Raabia was labelled within a deficit construct it was Omar, Shazia and Raabia herself who managed to change the labels from deficit to understandings of Raabia which reflected the child's and family's own understandings. The onus of responsibility for the building of a relationship between home and school fell to Omar to take up. While the alteration in the view of Raabia's own character, from wilful and problematic to friendly and hardworking was largely Raabia's responsibility.

Best Start and the needs of the emergent bilingual child: When Raabia entered school on the first day of Kindergarten she was assessed, along with all Kindergarten students, using the assessment tool, Best Start. The teachers were already aware that Raabia was learning English, as they had observed her during Orientation and as her father had alerted them to her language needs and abilities at that time, though at no time did Mrs Cooper refer to Raabia's emergent bilingual capital. Raabia's Best Start results, despite her active preparation at home prior-to-

school, was an overall zero grade. The teacher noted that she did not even attempt many of the requirements of the assessment.

In addition, though Raabia was assessed as needing language assistance in order to be able to progress in a monolingual (English) classroom, she was only allotted fifteen weeks ESL assistance outside of the classroom and this for only 45 minutes per week in a small group context. The ESL teacher did not attend to Raabia's needs in her mainstream classroom though she met weekly with Mrs Cooper to discuss Raabia's progress.

Raabia's teacher demonstrated that she took seriously the challenge of teaching the children in her class who were learning English, despite not having specific training for this. She employed a number of classroom strategies that she felt aided the 'ESL kids' in her care, including using picture cards to help explain upcoming activities and calling on these students regularly, so as to keep monitoring their understanding and progress. Despite Raabia's evident needs she was removed from the ESL intervention list due to the arrival of students deemed to be more needy. At no time was Raabia's linguistic capital noted in the classroom context during the classroom observations nor during teacher interviews.

Conclusion: The Askari family had confidence in their daughter. They believed that she could and would succeed at school. They believed that her personal capital (cultural and linguistic) would be sufficient for her to overcome the hurdles she would face due to her emergent bilingual status. The family saw the benefits of having two languages and felt that with hard work their daughter would be able to succeed in both.

Omar and Shazia also felt that their daughter's outgoing, friendly personality would be sufficient to overcome any initial troubles she might encounter with making friends. Raabia developed some clear strategies for friendship making. She repeatedly made conversation with the other students, she helped those around her, she took toys from home to share. In the last family conversation she related that she had 'special friends' and named them.

Despite Mrs Cooper's revelations of Raabia's 'bumpy' beginning at school, the Askari's saw the positive side of transition. They focussed on what they could do to aid Raabia. Initially, Raabia's 'virtual schoolbag' (Thomson, 2002) remained largely closed. However Omar and Shazia concentrated on improving her skill set. Despite this family having a clear understanding of the mainstream or dominant culture's school readiness requirements, Raabia's home literacy learning was not noticed during the Best Start assessment, due to her inability to communicate these effectively in English. She was labelled as a behaviour problem and it was only the Askari's joint efforts that altered this perception.

Abhijaata (Abhi)

Family Story

Abhijaata (Abhi) was 4 years 6 months in November 2010 when the first interview was conducted in her home (4 years 8 months when she entered school). Abhi lived with her mother (Ramani), father (Deepak) and two year old sister (Apala). At the time of the first interview the Gopan family had lived in Australia for two and a half years.

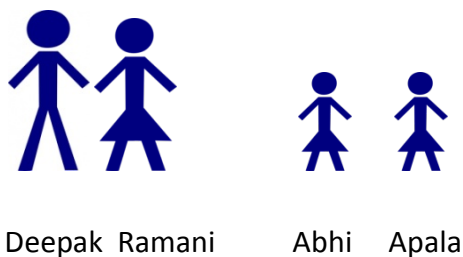


Figure 5.8 Gopan Family Participants

Deepak and Ramani were born in Kerala, India; Abhi was born in the UK and her younger sister, in Australia. The two children had never lived in India but had visited; the family planned an extended visit during the second half of Abhi's Kindergarten year. With no relatives living in Australia, Abhi and her family had contact with grandparents and other extended family members in India, by phone, most days. The Gopan's speak Malayalam in the home and with relatives in India, they speak English outside the home, in the workplace and as needed. Abhi was also learning a little Hindi, as her parents were concerned that she should be able to understand language in all settings in India on their return visits. Hindi and English are the two official languages of India. When asked about what aspects of her home culture that she felt were priorities for her daughters to learn, Ramani answered,

I want them to grow up knowing our culture... and the language, we want them to know our language ... so they can communicate, even though most of the people in India know English, they find it odd when

people talk to them in English... I don't want people to think of (my daughters) as hard to communicate with. (FI – 7 December 2010)

However her highest priority, as a parent, was for the girls grow up to be 'loving, caring and kind' (FI – 7 December 2010).

Deepak, a specialist doctor, gained his medical specialisation in the UK; and Ramani, an agricultural economist, gained her Master's degree in India and was undertaking full time home duties during the data collection period. On a number of occasions Abhi's mother discussed the possibility of undertaking further study when their Permanent Residency Visas were approved (Visas were approved during 2011).

While the Gopan family had moved a number of times in the previous five years for Deepak's study and then work, they had quickly developed friendships through work contacts and the local Indian community in their new home city. Deepak and Ramani selected a school for Abhi based on placing her with her 'best friend' who was a year older than her (FI – 30 November 2010) even though they lived out of area for that school. Abhi's best friend had moved to Australia with her family from the same state in India as Abhi's family and the Gopan's revealed that the two families spent time together socially on a regular basis.

Abhi was a very friendly, confident girl who, right from first meeting, was excited about having a visitor. Her inquisitive nature was evident throughout each visit, with Abhi asking many questions. She was inquisitive about me – asking my name, age, number of children, their ages and gender, even what my sons liked to eat. In our final meeting together before school Ramani referred to Abhi's excitement about our visits.

Ramani (Abhi) said 'Kathryn will come because she likes me very much!' (Abhi nods)

Kathryn That is true!

Abhi I like you too! (FI – 22 December 2010)

In the year before school, Abhi attended preschool two days a week. She made friends at preschool and had a photo of her preschool friends framed and positioned with framed family photos in the room we met in. Part of the reason for sending Abhi to preschool had been concern about Abhi's language acquisition, especially English, Ramani stated,

(Abhi) wasn't a great speaker. When she was three, she had only two or three words in her vocabulary. So I was feeling worried because she was getting confused... she started late but I think she is picking up. Now she can recognise words in Malayalam and English.

(FI – 22 December 2010)

Ramani and Deepak were keen to encourage Abhi's school readiness as well as growth in language acquisition. To that end, they made weekly library visits; bought educational games and books; read to their children daily; had given Abhi access to English speaking children's programmes on TV and DVD; as well as providing other resources including paper and pencils. Their main concern for Abhi, prior to school, appeared to be centred on her age. Ramani noted that they had planned on sending Abhi to school in 2012 but 'she was very enthusiastic and her preschool teachers are saying she is really ready to go to big school' (FI - 17 December 2010). Ramani's reaction was that she 'was a bit worried initially because I thought that she wouldn't be able to cope and because she is a bit small but hopefully she'll do fine' (FI - 17 December 2010).

Interpretive comment

Abhi's parents were both tertiary trained and the family had moved internationally to gain educational qualifications and employment. Both were educated in English. Ramani appeared relaxed about her daughter beginning school and they were pleased to have a special friend for Abhi who would be in Year 1 when Abhi entered Kindergarten. Academically, Ramani was proud of her daughter's literacy skills and voiced only a concern that she may not be able to keep up with the physical rigour of daily school attendance.

Deepak and Ramani were concerned for Abhi and her sister to be familiar with their culture of heritage and languages, including Malayalam (their home or heritage language), English and Hindi (India's two national languages). They also wanted Abhi to have every opportunity to gain a 'good' education so that she could decide the career she wanted to pursue.

At home

For our first meeting, I took a small cupcake as a gift for Abhi. However, when the door opened, there stood two young girls – Abhi and her younger sister, Apala. After the visit I wrote – 'to my dismay I saw she had a sister (as I had only one cupcake but here were two children)... Abhi took the paper off the cupcake, took one bite and then bent to her sister for her to take a bite too.' (Researcher's notes – FI – 30 November 2010). This kind, unprompted action was characteristic of my observation of this family's relationships during each of our visits together. Ramani was a calm, quiet woman with a good sense of humour. Our times together were filled with laughter, singing, the children dancing and all of us playing, there was even time for scooting.

At each of the visits prior to school, Abhi and her mother had prepared a literacy-based activity to show or share, as well as recounting past events or talking about upcoming activities. (These activities were chosen by Abhi and her mother, rather than requested by me.) The talk was predominantly in English but also featured some moments in Malayalam, this was an added aspect of literate practice in the Gopan family. The activities prepared by Abhi and her mother included drawing and writing; reading-card games; an alphabet workbook; Abhi's preschool folio and report from 2010; and, during the final visit, we looked at the photos that Abhi had taken with the disposable camera activity. During the home visits, Abhi was happy to participate in the literacy activities and often initiated play or discussion around these activities.

The Gopan family home was a resource rich environment. Activities flowed from talk to reading, ball or scooter games, dancing to puzzles. The children initiated most games and were keen participants, displaying clear understanding of turn

taking, rules and respect for others. Pursuit of knowledge appeared to be part of everyday life. In all the activity in this home that I witnessed, language acquisition was encouraged, English was primarily used during my visits however Ramani translated words or questions when Abhi was unsure of meaning; Ramani also answered questions or gave explanations as requested.

- Activities and Talk

Talk about cooking – During the first of our meeting a discussion took place in which Abhi talked about one of her hobbies. What she brought to the discussion was a highly literate explanation of one of her favourite pastimes – cooking with her mother. The discussion moved from a general explanation to planning for that afternoon’s cooking activity where Abhi and her mum would be cooking cupcakes for the next day’s ballet concert. She recounted – the recipe ingredients, method and her ideas for decorating.

Kathryn What do you like doing with your mummy?

Abhi I don’t know... (she pauses) Yeh – I like to play a game, I mixed the cake, but I put in the sugar and egg. I put a strawberry on a cupcake, and icing... and I put icing the pink and we put a cherry ... have we got cherry? (Abhi looks to her mother, who is nodding). Yeh, we got cherries in the cupcake (cupboard)...

Kathryn And do you like doing the mixing?

Abhi Yess, I do mix, I do mix it, but I only eat some mix with sugars. But I put one egg, another egg, ... two eggs? (looks to her mum for confirmation, again her mother nods) We get two eggs... we want to make lots of them... lots of cupcakes...

Ramani We make 25...

Abhi Lots

Ramani 25

Abhi Yeah 25... 25... 25 (she dances as she sings) (FI – 30 November 2010)

Despite some language limitations, particularly linked to Abhi’s sentence construction, Abhi was able to give a clear explanation of the activity she would be

undertaking with her mother that afternoon. It was part recount, of previous cooking episodes, and part imagining or predicting what would occur. Abhi was able to remember specific ingredients and amounts, she had a clear understanding of the procedure involved and was able to explain the role she would play in making the cupcakes.

Reading-Card Game – During the home visit on 7 December 2010, Abhi had a reading-card game ready to show me. The cards had a word written on one side (eg. pig) and a non-corresponding picture on the other (eg. picture of a pin). Abhi showed me how to play this game and in doing so exhibited a number of literacy skills. These skills included being able to recognise individual letters, being able to spell written words and recognise them as a meaningful group, Abhi could read an individual word on one card and match it to visual clues (including pin, pig, pan, mat) on another, and she could also sound out the letters. Abhi also exhibited social skills linked with turn taking and rule following.

Abhi (looking at a card) It's a P.

Ramani What is it? (Pause) What does it say? (pause) Sound it out

Abhi P... P... I don't know... P... P (Abhi is now only talking to her mother, they are sitting very closely, she leans in to her mother, Ramani hugs her and smiles) pig

Kathryn Oh that's so clever

Abhi P... I... G Pig (Abhi picks up the picture of a pig and turns it over to see what the word is on the back. She immediately says) P...I...N it's called... (she looks for a card) pin. (She finds the card with a picture of a pin on it.)

Abhi was eager to show me how to play this game and she was able to present a clear procedure for this activity. Again, Ramani supported her activity by making suggestions ('sound it out'), giving encouragements (smiling, hugging) and allowing Abhi time to find answers for herself.

Reading the alphabet workbook – Abhi was also keen to participate in extended dialogue. She shared an alphabet workbook in one interview, taking 20 minutes to answer the question I posed - “Can you tell me about this book?”. In this workbook, each page focussed on one letter of the alphabet, with writing and tracing; and with pictures and words to read, and so beginning with letter ‘A’, Abhi read every page, word and picture. She read the whole book. Abhi named each letter; explained what she knew of the phonetic aspects of each letter; noted and named every picture, often pointing to the associated word, indicating her ability to read text and her understanding of the link between the picture, the written word and meaning making. Again, Ramani scaffolded her reading.



Figure 5.9 Abhi hard at work (December 2010)

- Abhi ... and this is the letter C
- Kathryn Is that a C? What does it say?
- Abhi It say ‘ssss’, uhm ... Mummy what’s that?
- Ramani ‘Ca’
- Abhi Ca...Ca
- Kathryn Ca? It says two sounds, doesn’t it? /s/ for circle and /k/ for cat.
- Abhi Cat! (pointing to the picture)
- Kathryn Did you find more that start with C?
- Abhi Cat, car, cap, chick (she points to the pictures as she speaks.)
- Kathryn Oh so it says ‘ch’ as well.
- Abhi Yeeees... (there is a pause)
- Kathryn Have you done all of this book?

- Abhi Yes, most of it, I did it. (turns the page) D ... Deer starts with D, /d/ /d/
duck...
- Kathryn And I thought it was a chicken...
- Abhi I think it's a duck
- Kathryn I think you're right because it's got a duck bill and look at those feet
- Abhi Yeah, they're there for paddling (FI - 17 December 2010)

In this extended excerpt, three things are evident. Firstly, Abhi is engaged with this literacy activity that her mother initiated. Secondly, she is used to having active support from her mother throughout literacy activities as well as the interest of adults. Thirdly, her comprehension of technical spoken language is evident, as shown in the final segment considering the duck. Even though her interpretation is questioned, Abhi is unswayed and is able to add a sophisticated description of the duck's feet being 'for paddling'.

It was interesting to note that Ramani had bought Abhi this alphabet workbook only one week prior to this meeting and yet it was almost complete at the time of the home visit. This level of participation, instigated by Abhi, indicates that she was a dynamic, willing and keen learner who actively pursued literacy engagement. It also indicates Abhi's motivation and capacity for undertaking and completing literacy activities.

Language learning and use – Throughout the home visits Abhi was an avid talker, she was quick to answer questions and to participate in discussion. One interesting aspect of her language use was that she appeared to select the language to answer questions according to topic. Where discussion was related to school-based activities, Abhi was able to speak clearly and confidently in English, however when the discussion moved to topics of a more personal nature she communicated freely in Malayalam – apparently oblivious of my inability to understand her. Ramani noted that her own education in India had been conducted in English and so 'subjects like maths and science, started in English' however she also noted that 'we don't speak English at home so we don't communicate in English' (FI - 7

December 2010). This dichotomous relationship with language appears to have come through to the way Abhi took up her two primary languages as well.

Ramani What do you say for frog in Malayalam?

Abhi xxxx for frog, frog... ribbet, ribbet (she jumps like a frog)

Kathryn (to Ramani) Did she say the word for frog?

Ramani No, she didn't... she doesn't know the Malayalam for classifications but she does know it for speaking (with the family)...

(FI – 17 December 2010)

In our final meeting Abhi again used Malayalam to explain a home practice when describing the photos that she had taken. One of the photos was of Abhi and her sister praying. Ramani had explained that the family attend Temple once a month and that they had strong religious affiliation. She had also mentioned that part of encouraging her children to understand their Indian culture was that the family prayed together each evening. Photo No. 14 showed the two girls praying:

Abhi This is number 14.

Kathryn Oh what's happening here?

Abhi Number14, ***. (Abhi speaks and her mother laughs as I fail to understand.)

Kathryn Sorry, what did you say?

Ramani (still laughing) She said it in Malayalam. Yes, she is saying that she is praying, like this (Ramani clasps her hands and bows her head).

(FI – 22 December 2010)

Preschool

Abhi attended Fern Wood Preschool, the preschool closest to her home, two days a week for the year prior to school. This was an activity that she enjoyed and one that Ramani felt had really helped develop her English. During two of my visits Abhi brought out her Preschool Report and Folio to show me. Her chief interest in the two folios (one of her work and the other a report on her overall performance

at preschool during the year) was to point out pictures of herself – ‘Let’s look for me, this is me, this is me, and this is me, and this is me, this is me....’ (FI – 17 December 2010). However, the preschool’s assessment was very detailed and afterwards I reflected,

There was so much detail – considering the level of assessment and the number of scholastic hurdles that were assessed against the new national Framework that was released in 2009 (EYLF) which places its emphasis on ... a pedagogy of learning through play... it seems a long way from this very school-based, achievement-oriented form of assessment. (FI – 22 December 2010)

The Preschool Report included assessment on areas including (this is not an exhaustive list): gross motor co-ordination; fine motor co-ordination; developing friendships; interactive co-operative play; creative construction; creative expression through art (making a collage); English language skills; receptive skills; cognitive development – identifying shapes; problem solving; stimulating interest in reading; and taking an interest in writing. Each area was broken into subsections and each subsection was marked as either ‘A’ for achieved or ‘E’ for emerging. Abhi had an ‘A’ for every assessment area at the end of the second half of 2010.

For her end of year concert, Abhi was preparing an item with the other preschool children. When asked what she would be performing, Abhi sang the opening line of ‘Puff the magic dragon’ then explained, ‘James is the dragon, Tahlia is the xxx (unclear), Molly is the Prince and Daniel is the little King’. Following the concert the children who were to move on to Kindergarten had a special ‘Graduation’. The graduating children wore a gown and mortar board, made to imitate university graduations. Abhi continued, ‘and after that you gradu, gradua, congratulations – I’ll sit on a chair and (dance) .. Emma is dancing too and Lilly is watching all the dancing and Charlie is dancing, and Lachlan and Andrew play in the band’ (from FI – 7 December 2010). The preschool report clearly indicated that Abhi was ‘school ready’ and Abhi concurred – ‘Yesssss! I’m ready for big school!’ (FI – 22 December 2010).

Family expectations for the first year of school

Abhi's parents were very involved in preparing their daughter for school. They ensured she had access to language assistance both inside the home by supporting her language learning; and outside the home, in the form of preschool attendance and library visits. They also gave Abhi access to literacy resources and assisted her to learn how to work independently on those; there was a lot of literacy-related play; and there was positive talk about beginning school. The Gopan's had chosen Abhi's future school by referring to Abhi's best friend's family, ensuring that they knew quite a bit about the school before enrolment and ensuring that Abhi would have a friend there.

When asked about her hopes for the first year of schooling, Ramani stated -

Ramani I hope (Abhi) will be able to speak much better – you know like her sentence construction – that would be good... and ... that she'll be able to read things, I guess, read letters, because she loves reading..... I would love if she could read by herself because she would love to do that.

Kathryn [Turning to Abhi] What do you want to learn in Kindergarten, Abhi? Do you think you will be able to read?...

Abhi [She nods] I want to do lots of maths... look 1, 2, 3, - 3 hippos (she points to the counting book she is reading). (FI – 22 December 2010)

Given Ramani's and Deepak's levels of education and that they had travelled internationally to gain that education, it was evident that education was important to them and that decisions around the education of their children would also be significant. Ramani and Deepak took seriously the preschool's encouragement to send Abhi to school a year earlier than they had originally intended to due to her school readiness, and this, despite the financial cost to them of sending a child to school prior to gaining their Permanent Resident Visas. Ramani stated that 'we now have to pay (\$4 500 a year) for public school. We have to pay in the beginning with the application when you enrol' (FI – 30 November 2010). When asked about their hopes and expectations for Abhi, Ramani answered,

We dream of giving them a good education but it's up to them what they choose, what they want to do actually. If you ask Abhi what she wants to become she will say she wants to be a cook. (FI – 17 December 2010)

Interpretive comment

During the prior-to-school, home visits, Abhi and her mother were asked about activities that they undertook that encouraged literate skill development and practice. They indicated a number of activities that included either English or Malayalam as the language base. They discussed the reading of books at bedtime (English language books, discussion in either language); word games (English); workbooks (English); cooking together (Malayalam); and recounting past events (Malayalam). Other activities that facilitated social literate practice included: gatherings with friends (Malayalam and English); daily prayers and Temple visits fortnightly (Malayalam); daily contact with family members residing in India (Malayalam); ballet lessons (English); and swimming lessons (English). It is interesting to note that the family did not appear to favour one language, the division of use of language appeared pragmatic. However, Ramani was cognisant that Abhi had particular language strengths and shortfalls depending on topic.

Preschool had been viewed, by the Gopans, as both, a good prior-to-school, educative experience where Abhi would be able to develop skills for school including literacy skills; and a place where Abhi could learn English. The preschool teachers encouraged Abhi's parents to send her to school early due to her level of 'school readiness'. At preschool, Abhi had settled in well and made many friends. She was assessed as being socially engaged and she exhibited many literacy-related skills.

Ramani and Abhi were both looking forward to school and had similar hopes for the new year. Each expressed a desire that Abhi would learn to read and build on the skills she had already acquired at home and preschool.

Movement to school: Orientation

Abhi was enrolled at Sunny Hills Public School and attended two Orientation mornings in Term 4, 2010. During these visits Abhi met other children who would be in Kindergarten; she was teamed up with her Buddy (a senior Primary student) who would be a special helper for her during her first year at school; and she had a tour of the school. When asked about visiting her new school, Abhi stated, 'I did some play and the song, ... I decorated' (FI – 30 November 2010). Her reflection on meeting her buddy was that the buddies were there to help them.

Ramani Did you make any friends, Abhi, at big school?

Abhi Hmmm? I see lots of friends, the boys and the girls.

Kathryn Were they your buddies?

Abhi YEEESSS helped of all us.

She enjoyed the activities and seeing the school but the most important part of the visits appeared to be one interaction with the teacher, Abhi noted, 'a teacher said 'Good morning everyone' [spoken in a typical school singsong voice] so I said it' (FI – 30 November 2010), she repeated this memory during the following visit, again using the same singsong voice.

Interpretive comment

Orientation at Sunny Hills Public School was not as extensive as that for Fern Wood Public School however it had significant impact on Abhi. This was evidenced in her repeating her stories of her first visits to the school. Abhi appeared to enjoy the school visits and this was shown in her recounting the story of her experience in class, not simply remembering the activity of the day but also recalling the tones and exact wording used by other participants.

Kindergarten: Term One

Ms Chapman and Class KC

Ms Elizabeth Chapman – Elizabeth graduated in 2001 with a Bachelor of Early Childhood. This was her fourth year teaching Kindergarten at her present school.

Elizabeth described Sunny Hills, with 188 students (2011), as ‘very white, upper middle class’ with a small but growing number of children who had English as a second language. She explained that, while she had had ‘some (ESL) training through uni’, for most of her career she had ‘been in schools that are fairly white, fairly Anglo, (so ESL) hasn’t been a focus’. Elizabeth went on to outline that the best resource she used when working with students with linguistic diversity was Boardmaker, a Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) program, ‘because a lot of things you do for a child with autism are the same things that you’d do with a kindergarten class’ and she added that the emphasis on using ‘visuals’ assisted children learning English too. This software was used for the visual timetable used in class.



Figure 5.10 Examples of the Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) produced in the Boardmaker software- currently boasting over 11 000 picture symbols in its set

When asked about her definition of literacy, Elizabeth responded that she was in the process of rethinking her definition as she had noticed a change in the spoken language skills in the children she was teaching, so she had altered the emphasis she placed on the teaching of literacy skills. She went on:

My first priority in Kindergarten would be talking and listening, even as simple as sound production, which previously I wouldn't have done... that was a surprise for me here because it is an affluent area... Then of course, reading and writing comes in but it's with lots of discussion, lots of talking and sharing.

The school's professional development had been 'fairly literacy focused' though there had been a heavy emphasis on 'work on text type' in preparation for NAPLAN. While this was not a focus for Kindergarten, Elizabeth was noticing that she was having to consider the gaps she perceived even in Kindergarten and address these in light of the NAPLAN requirements – 'because it's assessed from Early Stage 1, you know if I'm noticing gaps then ... I need to do something more'. Elizabeth noted that the 'dominant influence in (her) practice was the students... you've got to be child-centred' rather than assessment-based.

When asked about what had prompted the change in emphasis in her understanding of literacy teaching, Elizabeth went on:

I think that conversation isn't valued so much... I know our parents are very attentive but they're also very busy you know, to be able to afford houses here they've got to work long hours. Our children tend to do after-school activities almost every day... it's structured but when you talk (to the children) their favourite things are Nintendo.

Elizabeth's thinking about literacy had been influenced by the use of Best Start. She stated that 'Best Start is your best friend in literacy acquisition'. The initial assessment was used as a guide, initially for phonetic awareness and later for reading and writing groups.

Against this backdrop, I enquired about how Abhi had fared in the assessment. Elizabeth noted that the Best Start assessment is 'very prescriptive' – 'it's supposed to be objective... so it's supposed to run exactly the same for every child' however 'I knew a lot of the questions I was asking, (Abhi) didn't even comprehend, which meant she didn't have an opportunity to process what I was asking, you know, to answer the question.' She added that as she saw Abhi was able to achieve in class, she noted 'I just throw out what I heard on the first day and go from there'. Her final comment was that this initial assessment report, to be sent home was sometimes 'confronting for parents'.

Class KC - By the time of the first teacher interview (TI - 24 February 2011) there were 19 children in KC. This class had two children who Elizabeth identified as having culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds. There was no 'ESL' support at Sunny Hills Public School. Elizabeth stated that most children had attended Preschool.

Interpretive comment

Elizabeth was highly respected at Sunny Hills Public School. Upon being introduced to the Principal, I was told that Elizabeth was a 'great teacher'. The Principal highlighted this as she noted that she had wanted her own grandchild to have Ms Chapman as his Kindergarten teacher (TI – 24 February 2011 – Researcher Reflections).

Elizabeth saw her role as being a teacher who created her program around the specific needs of the students in her class. As a result, she used the Best Start assessment tool, as a guide to informing her practice – she named it her 'best friend' for literacy instruction. However, she was also willing to 'throw out' the initial results if they were proven wrong and she noted that the tool was 'prescriptive'. While Elizabeth was not willing to share Abhi's Best Start results, it became apparent that Abhi had not been able to perform well during the initial assessment as Elizabeth had noted that these results might be 'confronting' when presented at parent interviews.

Literacy was defined in terms of reading, writing, speaking and listening; with Elizabeth placing emphasis, early in Kindergarten, on speaking and listening. This was a newly placed emphasis as Elizabeth had found the students' needs were altering with their parents' workloads. Elizabeth described the area surrounding Sunny Hills Public School as 'affluent' but also noted the increasing pressure on families in the area to maintain standards of living which resulted in extended work hours with less time available to talk with their children.

Sunny Hills Public School was the school in this study with the lowest percentage of bilingual or emergent bilingual students (see Table 3.2). Consistent with this demographic attribute was the school's lack of access to an ESL teacher.

Classroom Observations

During Term 1 I spent six mornings observing Abhi in her Kindergarten classroom (from 9.00am to 11.00am), this was Ms Elizabeth Chapman's allotted Literacy Block. On first arriving I noticed a bird (the class pet) in one corner, a large green frog soft-toy sat on a story-telling chair next to the mat area, there was also a toilet and a wet area. There were five blocks of desks for the 19 students in the class. Each child had their name printed on their desk along with an alphabet chart, on each clutch of desks was a tin of pencils to share. Artwork covered the walls and in the 'Library' corner was a number of tubs filled with books as well as a number of resources shelves. On one wall was a set of cards that outlined the class timetable for the day, this included break times and subjects as well as regular visitors (eg. fitness and library times and the Japanese teacher). This room was very orderly (tissues, hand wipes, library books, exercise books, etc. all had a known place) and this was also seen in how the children behaved, when they entered or lined up to leave the room they were quiet and walked with their hands held together behind their backs.

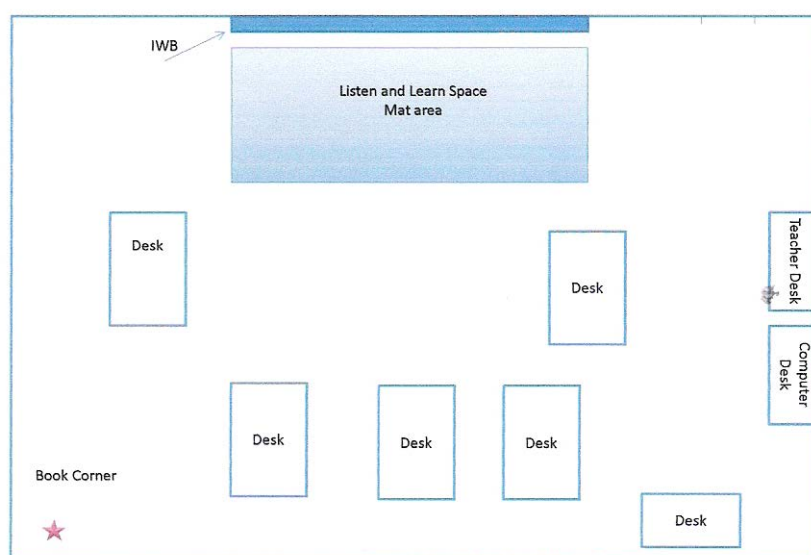


Figure 5.11 Classroom layout

The stipulated routine was closely followed, though it varied over time. When the children entered the room, Ms Chapman began to play a song on the class CD player and the children had time to put away their notes, homework or drink bottle but were expected to be seated in the mat area (known as the ‘Listen and Learn Space’) by the end of the song. In this class there was a lot of singing and praise was given for effort made. Ms Chapman sang regularly during class activities, including a sung roll call. As was the case with Mrs Cooper at Fern Wood Public School, Ms Chapman was quick to praise her students and often encouraged the children by praising those who were actively attending rather than noticing those who weren’t.

(A full account of the six classroom observations is given in Appendix J.)

Synopsis of Observations

Once the children were seated during my first classroom observation, Ms Chapman began singing ‘If you’re happy and you know it’. Watching Abhi, I saw her sit alone and a little separate from the rest of the class, in the Listen and Learn Space, she didn’t sing but did do the actions.

Ms Chapman introduced the activities for the day, saying, 'Today is Fantastic Friday! We have fitness later and we will have Miss Denny come to teach us Japanese'. In my notes I wrote 'I wonder how Abhi is going – she speaks Malayalam at home, English at school and is learning Hindi – and now Japanese on Fridays. At first glance she seems a bit withdrawn' (CO – 25 February 2011).

Class greeting - A daily activity was the class greeting, Freya was selected to choose the number of children each student must greet and how they were to greet each other. She decided that each child must say 'good morning' to six other children. The class stood and moved around greeting each other. Abhi was the only child not to participate. She stood to one side, when one or two children sought her out she waved at them a little, but did not speak. When the activity was complete Abhi again sat apart on the mat.

Writing the day's story - Later, sitting in a circle, the class were asked to think of something they like doing and to make a sentence for the class. Ms Chapman's sentence was – 'I like to play drums.' The children took turns around the circle. When Abhi had her turn she was so softly spoken that it took three attempts before she was heard – her sentence, 'I like to play cubby.' After the class completed their sentences, they practised air writing 'I lik' and then moved back to their desks to draw a picture in their workbooks. Abhi began to draw a picture, when Ms Chapman visited her group of desks, the children again revised how to write 'I like' by sounding it out and then air writing it together. Abhi was able to suggest one sound – the /k/. They all wrote as much of their sentence as they could and then finished the matching drawing. Later Ms Chapman finished their sentences.

Matching literacy from home to school: growing new literate practices - Each week during the observations Abhi was able to actively participate in the class writing time by giving sounds that she could hear and from the second observation she was able to undertake some writing before the teacher reached her table.

While Abhi was not always successful she was increasingly able to participate in the academic aspect of class. The second observation's letter-sound was 'a' - /a/. I noted:

This week Ms Chapman introduced the mystery bag. Each week an object beginning with the sound of the week is placed in the mystery bag for the children to try and guess. This week the children have guessed – alligator, ant, arrow, apple, ambulance, astronaut and axe. Then it is Abhi's turn to guess...

Abhi Frog

Ms Chapman Frog has /f/ at the beginning.

Ms Chapman shows other pictures - mouse, apple, snake, ant, snail (these answers are all either incorrect or they have already been guessed). Finally they get to pictures of 'animals' – they add 'animals' to their list.

Abhi (puts her hand up) My sister's name is Apala.

Ms Chapman (smiles) Do you think your sister is in the mystery bag?
Oh I don't think she'd like it!

Abhi (laughing) NO! (CO – 4 March 2011)

Establishing her social identity – As highlighted in the first week's classroom observation of Abhi, she appeared isolated. In the fifth observation (Week 9, Term 1) she still seemed to have times where she sat in isolation and did not participate in class activity. However, despite this continuing isolation at times, by the third observation change had begun.

After the introductory session (of Week 7 of Term 1), the teacher handed out workbooks and Abhi showed her a drawing. Tammy (sitting next to Abhi) spoke up, 'I made that for Abhi!' - Abhi smiled and placed the drawing in front of her as she worked. After completing the first

task Abhi waved to her friends as she left the table. She then went to the reading corner and read a book with Tammy. Tammy put her arm around Abhi's waist as they quietly read together. (CO – 11 March 2011)

This introduction to Abhi's social engagement, particularly the friendship with Tammy, was one that continued with a growing circle of friends. However, on the same day Abhi's friendships were challenged by another child, Ella, who complained to the teacher on two occasions about Abhi being unkind to her. Later, during the final classroom observation, Ella again challenged Abhi:

During this segment, at the table next to me sat Ella, the girl from Observation 3 who had been unkind to Abhi, she addressed the table of girls she sat with – 'Well, Abhi isn't my friend!'. Whereas during the previous incident the other children had been upset by this behaviour and were silent, this time a girl responded quickly, 'Well, Abhi IS my friend.' Ella continued to speak unkindly about Abhi but none of the other children would join her. (CO - 1 April 2011)

It was interesting to note that during the final observation Abhi was flanked by girls each time she sat in the mat area. Abhi had successfully negotiated the social aspect of the school context, establishing her social identity, appearing to form ongoing friendships.

Speaking up - During the opening observation Abhi was noted as quiet and reserved, withdrawn. When she spoke the teacher had to ask her to repeat herself as she was so softly spoken. However, during the fourth observation I noted:

This morning Abhi was asked to read the morning's routine to the class. She stood by the signs, with pictures and words, and read to the class.

Abhi	Singing
Ms Chapman	K1K (the Kindergarten/Year 1 class in the next room) is coming for sounds
Abhi	We have munch and crunch; work; reading; lunch.

Abhi pointed to each sign as she spoke, her voice was strong, the whole class could hear. (CO – 18 March 2011)

Assessment at the end of Term 1 – In Abhi's class I was not able to observe the final end of term assessment. However, Ms Chapman did select Abhi to read the class sentences during my final observation:

Abhi moved to the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB). There were two sentences written on the board – 'Here is a ball. It is for Tammy.' Next to each sentence was a picture – a ball was next to the first sentence and a picture of a girl was next to the second sentence. Using the green IWB marker, Abhi was to circle all the words that she knew, then for words that she did not know she was to circle any letters that she recognised in red. Abhi circled every word in green, then read the sentences. Ms Chapman asked how she knew Tammy's name (Tammy being one of Abhi's friends), Abhi responded that she recognised the 'y' at the end of the word.

Ms Chapman Abhi is the first person to read all the sentences. That is because she is practicing a lot at home. That is well done!

Abhi received a sticker for her 'great reading' and the class clapped her efforts. (CO – 1 April 2011)

Here Abhi clearly showed her ability to read the two sentences. She spoke clearly and was commended by both Ms Chapman and the class as a result.

Interpretive comment

Initially, Abhi appeared isolated during the observational sessions, often sitting alone on the mat. She was watchful but participated only when asked by her teacher or approached by a student. Over time Abhi became more confident with the other children. She made meaningful and noted connections during Term 1, especially with Tammy and she was able to stand up to pressure from Ella, while I witnessed both these developing relationships, Ms Chapman also referred to them

during our interviews. In line with the development of these friendships, Abhi appeared to become more confident in her social and academic interactions in class.

Ms Chapman was an inclusive teacher who encouraged all her students to participate, giving frequent praise and structuring her class time so that there were multiple opportunities each day for students to trial or practice their skills both individually and in small groups. In the latter weeks of observation, Abhi began offering answers. By the fourth observational period Abhi was seen to be an active participant in the class and was able to lead the class in reading the morning's timetable using visual and written cues. During the final session, she showed her confidence and skill in reading the class sentences, the first child in the class to be able to complete the reading unaided. At no point during the six observations was Abhi's bilingual ability mentioned nor was she afforded any assistance or special consideration.

(A full account of the classroom observations can be found at Appendix J.)

Reflections on transition to school

After the classroom observations were completed a final meeting was held with Elizabeth Chapman and then with Abhi and her family. During these two meetings all the adult participants were asked to reflect on their experience of the first term of school and on their understanding of Abhi's transition to school. Abhi was also asked about her experience of beginning school.

The view from school

After completing the classroom observations in Term 1, Elizabeth Chapman had to take extended leave due to illness. There was a further short delay as Ms Chapman held parent-teacher interviews, she felt that the outcome from her interview with Abhi's parents would enhance her interview for this study.

Social success

In 2011, Sunny Hills Public School had one Kindergarten class (KC) and one composite class, Kindergarten/Year One class (K1K). When asked about how the new students were selected for these classes, Elizabeth related that 'it was more about confidence'. At Orientation, Abhi was noted as being 'very quiet... quite reserved, still involved but not really wanting to speak up'.

During Term 1, Elizabeth noted, she had 'had to intervene outside the classroom' as there was some concern about Abhi's friendship with Harinda, the friend whose attendance at the school had been the initial reason for the Gopan's selecting Sunny Hills Public School. While Elizabeth's reason for intervening was stated as being because the friendship was becoming 'possessive', it is noteworthy that Harinda was the only person who spoke Malayalam in the school and the only friend that Abhi had upon entering school.

Elizabeth explained that in Class KC student table groupings were altered regularly to assist the children in 'socialising with a broad range of people not just sticking to one person'. Elizabeth noted that Abhi had been 'central to the socialisation' of the class. By the end of Term 2, Elizabeth noted that Abhi 'has sometimes [been] pulled up for being chatty, which is lovely'; and she spoke warmly of the growing friendship that Abhi had with Tammy. Elizabeth noted that Abhi's extended absence from the end of Term 2 was already causing Tammy to feel 'a bit devastated' but she added that they 'are gorgeous together'.

Language

Abhi's initial Best Start assessment was not available for this study but it is significant to note that Abhi was not assessed for any 'ESL' assistance and Elizabeth explained that there was 'no ESL assistance in the school'. When asked about Abhi's language development Elizabeth explained that initially Abhi 'used to converse in her own language'. As the interviewer, I assumed that this statement then referred to Abhi speaking her own home language and had mixed it with English – however Elizabeth went on (from the above statement), somewhat

surprisingly, to indicate that she thought that Abhi had been conversing in her own 'made up' language.

Kathryn To you or to the kids?

Elizabeth To anyone. She would just create words and she'd be very vibrant and very expressive and would have this whole conversation.

In response to my query about how the other students responded, she added:

They talked back, that's probably been the most helpful thing for her language development, more than me, that conversation with the other kids.

Finally, when reflecting on the recent parent-teacher interview she had conducted with Abhi's parents, Elizabeth noted Ramani's and Deepak's concern that Abhi was, by the end of Term 2, in danger of losing her home language. She went further to add that during the interview the three adults had 'talked about how (language is) important to keep up' and Elizabeth finished by saying that 'they say it's easier to learn at that age as young children are able to 'pick up things' very easily'.

Academic achievement

When Elizabeth was asked to reflect on Abhi's first term of school and her academic achievement, especially related to literacy development, she began by noting that 'there had been quite a lot of work put into (Abhi's) literacy before she came to school and in the beginning the kind of rote learning stuff like the sight words she absolutely flew through'. She went on, '(Abhi) can spell beautifully'. Elizabeth also noted that Abhi was one of a few children who was now moving to class K1K for spelling and reading groups rather than remaining in her own class for 'sounds'. This was a significant pointer to her literacy achievement and Elizabeth was quick to add 'you know, she's one of the higher achieving kids in the class'.

Despite this glowing assessment, Elizabeth added 'but where there's more comprehension involved then that's where you see differences... she doesn't have the text structure there or that ability to add more'. Her responses were 'very simple, direct... without that ability to build on a little bit more'. Her writing was

‘exactly what I’ve modelled... or what one of her friends has shared. [During writing circle sessions Abhi was noted as saying] ‘I don’t know’, if she hasn’t had that model from her peers before it’s her turn. I know she is much more comfortable if she’s seen the other kids do it first.’

Elizabeth perceived that Abhi’s current literacy needs centred on the ability to be ‘expressive... using adjectives to make (writing or speaking) more interesting or adding more detail or just giving more information and personalising’ her work. She felt that Abhi’s high achievement to date would have to be continually monitored as class work became ‘more interpretive’. Adding, ‘it’s going to become more difficult for her when the tasks become more involved, we’re doing one- or two-step tasks and you know that once there are a few different things to do in one task that that’s where it will become difficult for her’. This concern about Abhi’s apparently limited comprehension in English was something that Elizabeth had been considering and she outlined possible solutions to this issue when she stated that ‘small groups and one-on-one conferences’ would be vital for ‘Abhi and for other kids from ESL backgrounds (as it’s) really hard to see how much they are taking in and how much they’re just smiling and nodding because that’s what the teacher wants to see’. She went further to add that these methods would ‘make the difference’ and allow her ‘the opportunity to monitor... so if I see them faltering I can step in... I can ask for support’.

Transition

Initial comments on Abhi’s transition to Kindergarten were positive – she had settled in quickly and though she was quiet, Elizabeth went on to state that ‘it wasn’t an unusual quiet, it was a ‘beginning of school’ quiet that you see with a lot of kids, it was for a week or two’ and then Abhi ‘sort of [found her] feet’ once she had learned the routines. However, later in the interview Elizabeth noted that Abhi ‘had a few faltering steps’ which she felt were probably because she (the teacher) had ‘not always (been) able to understand what she was trying to tell me’. There had been a ‘few teary days, she had a few “I feel sick, I have a sore tummy”, which ... was as a response to her situation’. Elizabeth noted that this inability to

communicate ‘would have been a very daunting prospect’ for Abhi, as she realised that she was not always able to get her ‘message across’ to the adult caring for her.

Elizabeth’s final comment about Abhi’s ‘social growth’ was ‘I’d love to take more credit for how kids settle in but I think the social side of it’s got a lot more to do with it... we always have nice kids here, it makes my job easy as far as transition goes.’

Relationship with Abhi’s parents

During the final interview, Elizabeth noted ‘we don’t have parking [so] you don’t see as much of parents’ as the school was built on a very steep hill, with little parking available on the surrounding streets. However, Elizabeth had met Abhi’s parents and she had found them ‘very friendly, very open and approachable’. Elizabeth noted that the Gopan’s had needed assistance to read Abhi’s first school report - ‘they needed some support to understand the report... – it’s a lot of writing and we’re encouraged to use professional language’ ... ‘it can make it hard for parents to interpret’.

(All quotations in this section are taken from TI – 15 August 2011 unless otherwise stated.)

Interpretive comment

Language acquisition and comprehension appear to be at the heart of Elizabeth’s concerns about Abhi’s transition to school. Elizabeth’s praise of Abhi’s early home literacy learning and her joy over Abhi’s success with literacy during the first two terms of school, culminating in her comment that Abhi was ‘one of the higher achieving kids in the class’ are tempered by her ongoing concerns about Abhi’s level of comprehension in English. Elizabeth noted that modelling from teacher and peers was still necessary for Abhi as she was not yet able to create extended ‘expressive’ constructs either verbally or in text.

While Elizabeth was very positive about her relationship with Ramani and Deepak, she did not appear cognisant of their level of educational achievement or

professional status, rather she pointed out their lack of understanding due to her use of 'professional language'.

Abhi's overall transition to school was viewed as fairly similar to most other children, however there is no acknowledgement of Abhi's bilingual status and Abhi's observed silent period was minimised in the teacher's reflection.

The view from home – the final family interview

Entering the Gopan's home for the final family conversation was like visiting with old friends. The Gopan family had just returned from an extended visit to India. Abhi was again her chatty, friendly self – the reserved school student gone, she danced me into the family room and then proceeded to continue dancing while she talked. At this meeting Deepak was home and introduced himself, though he didn't participate further until after the recording had concluded and I was leaving. As with my final visit with Raabia, I gave Abhi a small book as a gift to thank her for her participation (*"Not me," said the Monkey*, by Colin West, Walker Books 1987). And as was my experience with Raabia, after thanking me, Abhi went straight off to look at her book, returning only when the adults were seated.

Academic performance and language competence

Abhi demonstrated her growing command of English and her increased literacy expertise throughout our meeting. She was also able to comment on her bilingual ability.

A change in interviewer – During this interview one aspect that altered was that three times Abhi demonstrated her newly acquired reading skills by taking the place of the interviewer. I had a list of questions that I thought I might use to prompt me during the visit. Most of the questions were printed but I had also added one hand written question. As I sat down Abhi bent over my question prompter -

Kathryn You can read the question if you like.

Abhi (reading) Tell me about your teacher - What did you do...

Later in the visit Abhi looked at my list and read

Abhi Breaks

Kathryn Wow – you can read ‘breaks’

Abhi That’s ‘Munch and Crunch’

In this example, Abhi demonstrated not only that she could decode the text but that she could also comprehend the meaning I had attributed to this single word query.

A third time, Abhi read my questions –

Abhi Do you think... (she pauses)

Kathryn Oh you can read my hand writing?

Abhi Do you think she needed... uhm

Kathryn (after a long pause) support

In this third example of her ability to read, Abhi demonstrated that she could even decode hand written text.

Reading her gift – Abhi read her book to herself while I talked with Ramani. Later in the interview she was not keen to read it to me because it was ‘too easier’. However, she changed her mind and read the book with few difficulties. This book is a humorous story depicting a monkey who ‘pranks’ his friends but then denies his behaviour, until the elephant sprays him with water in an effort to stop his ‘monkey business’. From the reading there were just two words – snorted and rhinoceros – that Abhi was unable to pronounce but she read them consistently. Otherwise she made only two uncorrected errors from the 129 words that she read. Abhi demonstrated her comprehension of the story in two ways:

Firstly, she made two comments during the reading about the activities of the monkey which indicated that she had understood that the monkey was lying about his behaviour (*italicised text* - the text from the book Abhi was reading; regular text – what Abhi said).

Abhi *'Who keeps dropping bananas?' growled the lion.*
 'Not me,' said the monkey.
 But he did drop it!

Secondly, Abhi was able to read with excellent intonation and expression to allow listeners to hear the meaning. When reading the line:

'Slurp, slurp, slurp went the elephant. Whooooosh!'

Abhi pointed to the elephant spraying water from his trunk while she read and then she laughed as she pointed to the animals, wet with the elephant's spray. Ramani's responses to the new book included explaining her pleasure at seeing her daughter's progress,

She is reading a lot these days... When she gets a book that she can read,
she'll read it immediately. She loves it!

Being bilingual – When I began to ask Abhi about her English she took control of the conversation and began to talk about her ability in Malayalam and being bilingual.

Kathryn You're talking a lot in English now

Abhi Yes, but I can talk in Malayalam... My sister, she always say English in India.

Kathryn So, when you were in India did you speak a lot of Malayalam?

Abhi YES! I go to my Dad's Mum and family; my Dad has two brothers and my mum has one sister... I got one sister myself!

Kathryn Was it a bit hard speaking Malayalam?

Abhi Nooooo... it was easy!

In this segment it was clear that Abhi was confident with her home language and very capable of discussing this with me in English. She was also able to demonstrate sound knowledge of the familial relationships she experienced in India - in English, a complicated task for many children of her age.

Ramani's reflection on Abhi's overall literacy and language growth – Ramani indicated that Abhi was happy in class and that she had not had any issues with speaking English at school. Also that Abhi had not had any extra assistance with her English. She went on to note that Abhi 'is reading very well now... and she is speaking much better than before. She likes writing.' Later in our meeting Ramani returned to this topic adding:

Ramani She is doing good in spelling now. She got a recent report that said that she is excellent. Abhi, you got a Spelling Merit, didn't you?

Abhi I am good in spelling but Tammy got two and I got one! And I said 'gratulations' to her!

Social success

During Classroom Observation 3, Abhi's friend, Tammy, was introduced to the narrative. Throughout the year Tammy and Abhi had become firm friends. This relationship had been noted and encouraged by Abhi's teacher and parents. Abhi's and Tammy's parents had also become friends. When asked about friendships that Abhi had made, Ramani commented,

(Abhi) knew one girl, a family friend, and she was mostly playing with her in the beginning. Ms Chapman pointed out that she was only playing with her. Now she has a beautiful friendship with Tammy and she is playing more with other girls in her class.

In a short discussion with Deepak after the interview he mentioned that he had noticed that Abhi had initially felt some guilt over not playing with Harinda at school but that that was now behind and she was well settled with her classmates. Another indicator of Abhi's success in making friends was that she had recently been invited to her friend, Cassie's, birthday party, saying 'And now what's exciting is I went to Cassie's party'.

Transition to school

When asked about Abhi's first days at school, Ramani smiled and grimaced together and responded,

Abhi was quite cool and happy... she didn't have any problems, she just went in and she was fine and she was playing in the room. I was a bit teary but she did very well.... She was very happy. Ms Chapman was really great she is absolutely like a Mum. She takes care of them very well and she is very happy and smiley and very comforting.

Abhi added that she liked 'colouring and drawing and writing' at school.

The Gopan's final reflection on Abhi's transition to Kindergarten occurred as I was leaving and was noted in the reflection only, 'Ramani and Deepak said that whenever they had been unsure about anything going on at the school they had made an appointment to ask the teacher. They felt comfortable to do this'.

Interpretive Comment

The 'view from home' as Abhi made the transition from home to school was an almost entirely positive one. Abhi had made friends, loved her teacher, had conquered in every area of academic undertaking and had appeared confident about communicating in either of her two languages, as appropriate. Abhi had had to contend with some friendship management with her Kindergarten friends and her original friend, Harinda. However, this had been fairly quickly overcome and she now happily played with her Kindergarten peers and had opportunities to see Harinda outside of school.

Summary of Abhi's story

The second family narrative, that of Abhi Gopan and her family, is a narrative that includes data collected from family conversations held in the Gopan's home, two

teacher interviews and six classroom observations. This summary highlights the main themes apparent in Abhi's narrative of transition.

Identity construction: Deepak and Ramani are both highly qualified professionals, who migrated to Australia for Deepak to take up a specialist medical position in a city hospital. As they looked forward to school with their elder daughter they were not concerned about either social or academic issues. Their main concern was about Abhi's age, as she would not turn five until the second term of her Kindergarten year. The Gopan's were concerned that Abhi would not cope with the rigours of attending school daily. However, they had decided to follow the encouragement of Abhi's preschool teachers and send her to school. This was also despite the high cost of schooling in Australia for those who had not yet been granted permanent resident visas. This action of following professional advice despite personal cost showed the Gopan's commitment to education for their children.

In our second meeting, Ramani reflected that one of her priorities in raising her children was that they grow up knowing about their cultural heritage and this included knowing the three languages necessary to take part in life in Australia and in India: English, Malayalam and Hindi. However, Ramani noted that her highest priority was for the girls to grow up to be 'loving, caring and kind' (FI – 7 December 2010). This statement appeared to be reflected in Abhi's efforts to establish her identity throughout our conversations at home and in how she behaved towards others throughout data collection. Abhi was always friendly, confident and outgoing, both in the way that she behaved when I was present and in the stories she recounted about the friends she had made at preschool. Her inquisitiveness was evident in the number of questions she asked me during our conversations and in the way she took an active role in conversations during my visits. Abhi actively positioned herself as interested in reading and writing and demonstrated her abilities in these areas through various play activities that she initiated during my visits.

Ramani took a great deal of care in supporting or scaffolding Abhi's language and literacy development in their literacy- and language-resource rich home. She listened carefully to Abhi, translating my questions and giving other linguistic assistance as needed. Both parents encouraged Abhi and her sister to enjoy reading by reading to them daily. Abhi was also quick to recall visits to the local library, swimming and dancing lessons and she was keen to share her home literacy activities. Abhi demonstrated her knowledge of letters and sounds and read to me during our initial meetings prior to school. These activities and Abhi's expertise aligned exactly with the extensive reporting of the end of year preschool assessment. These activities and acquired skills led Abhi to exclaim 'Yesssss! I'm ready for big school!' (FI – 22 December 2010).

However, initial classroom observations showed Abhi to be isolated, not participating confidently in classroom activity. Even in the fifth observation (Week 9 of Term 1) Abhi continued, at times, to sit alone; she continued to be silent during new activities, even where these included knowledge of letter names and sounds that she shown knowledge of prior-to-school; even when other children offered examples (CO – 25 March 2011).

Despite this, Abhi established friendships during first term. Her friendship with Tammy became noteworthy for all of the participants. She experienced some ongoing unkindness from Ella but she was able to manage these interactions. In the final teacher interview, Ms Chapman noted Abhi's friendliness and 'chattiness' as qualities that had developed.

Abhi was also able to establish her identity as a reader. During the final observation Abhi became the first student in Class KC to successfully read the morning sentences. Ms Chapman's praise included her acknowledgement of both Abhi's hard work at school and home. However, in the second teacher interview Ms Chapman, having recognised Abhi's ability to both read and spell, qualified this by noting that this was rote learning only and that she still had difficulty with comprehension. A concern that she felt would be ongoing due to Abhi's 'ESL background'. Ms Chapman stated that she was addressing her concerns through

consistently monitoring Abhi's comprehension in small group activities and one-on-one meetings. Ms Chapman felt that these strategies would aid Abhi's development.

During Term 1 Abhi was able to establish her identity in class as an active participant, socially capable and hard working. This was despite having an extended silent period and despite the teacher's concern that she had limited comprehension in some areas.

Best Start and the needs of the emergent bilingual child: During Orientation Abhi was noted as being very quiet and reserved. Ms Chapman explained that Abhi was placed in a Kindergarten-only class as she was perceived to be less confident than other students. While Ms Chapman referred to Abhi's quietness a number of times (both during Orientation and Term 1), she stated that this was not unusual, though she also mentioned Abhi's inability to communicate more than once. Abhi was not assessed for ESL assistance and the school did not employ a specialist ESL teacher, though the school did employ a Japanese teacher. During the teacher interviews no mention was made of Abhi's prior-to-school language or literacy competences. Ms Chapman did, however, refer to Abhi's use of her home language as 'made up' or created words twice. Seemingly in contradiction of this, in the second teacher interview Ms Chapman noted that Abhi's parents had been concerned that Abhi was in danger of losing her home language. This is the only mention made in the teacher interviews of this child's bilingual status. When Ms Chapman spoke of Abhi being upset at school, she noted that Abhi's inability to communicate would have been very hard for such a young child. However Abhi's one prior-to-school friend, who also spoke Malayalam, was not called on to translate, nor did there appear to be any acknowledgement that Abhi was speaking in her home language when she was upset.

When asked about Abhi's initial Best Start results, Ms Chapman confirmed that Abhi had not been able to comprehend much of what was asked of her. She also noted that Best Start as an assessment tool was 'very prescriptive' sometimes making the results quite 'confronting for parents', indicating that Abhi had not

been able to showcase her literate skills during the initial assessment. While alluding to Abhi's poor Best Start outcomes, Ms Chapman also noted that she would 'just throw out' the Best Start results where she later found them to be incorrect. She went on to state that Abhi was now one of the 'higher achieving kids in the class'. She also noted that Abhi had a lot of home support. By the time of the final interview Abhi had shown herself to be able to spell and read 'beautifully'. While Abhi was able to rote learn, Ms Chapman was monitoring her closely as she was concerned that as class work became more 'interpretive' this student would find tasks too difficult.

Ms Chapman referred to having a number of strategies that she used to assist the children in her class who were 'ESL', these included the use of the software package BoardMaker, the use of picture cards to remind students of daily activities and allowing children like Abhi many opportunities to hear and see other students' attempts at activities before having to perform themselves. She also referred to providing ongoing monitoring of Abhi's progress through small group work and one-on-one conferencing. These activities would not only provide support in learning but also give Ms Chapman updates of Abhi's comprehension and would enable the teacher to know when to ask for extra support.

Capital and deficit: As stated above, Abhi's home life was resource rich in terms of literacy and language capital. Her parents both took time to encourage language and literacy growth and they were willing to follow professional advice from the preschool teachers when it was given. At home they provided Abhi with books, workbooks and stationery, games and puzzles, activities and excursions that they felt promoted her literate awareness prior to school. They actively encouraged her language growth in her home language, Malayalam, through use in the home, for religious purposes and with family members in India on a daily basis. They also actively encouraged her language growth in English by using English at home, during story book reading at bedtime, by taking her to preschool, and other activities. They had decided that Abhi would also begin learning Hindi, once she had settled in to school so that she could converse with her extended family in

India. On trips to visit relatives, Abhi was confident to speak in Malayalam. In the final family conversation Abhi was able to discuss how she used both English and Malayalam.

During the prior-to-school home visits Abhi was an actively engaged participant in each conversation, often leading the activity. In recounting cooking with her mother, she was able to show clear understanding of the method, language needed and some control of the story telling process. Despite her limited English, Abhi was able to convey meaning with enthusiasm. Abhi was also learning to read in English and was able to show detailed knowledge of letters and sounds (also numbers). Abhi's preschool report showed Abhi to have excelled in school readiness activities.

During the teacher interviews, Ms Chapman stated that she had noticed a general downturn in the linguistic capital of the students in her class over the four years she had worked in Sunny Hills Public School. While an affluent area, she suggested that parents were working hard to keep up with the costs associated with living in the area and they had little time for preparing their children for school entry. Ms Chapman did not comment on how she understood Abhi and her family to fit this generalisation. She did not seem to be aware that Abhi was an 'out of area' student, that her parents were well educated or that her mother spent a great deal of time assisting Abhi and her sister to take up literacy and language skills.

Abhi entered school with her Thomson (2002) backpack full, however it was some time before she appeared to begin to negotiate unpacking this capital in the classroom. During Orientation, Abhi was assessed as lacking confidence, reserved and quiet. Upon entry to Kindergarten, Abhi's literacy skills gained in the prior-to-school years were largely unrecognised, as was evidenced in her poor initial Best Start outcomes. In the initial weeks of school, she was observed to be silent and she exhibited a number of behaviours which indicated some social isolation. Abhi sat alone, didn't raise her hand to give responses and was so quietly spoken, when called on, that she was unheard by her teacher or classmates.

However, by the time of the second teacher interview Abhi had negotiated her identity as a reader and speller in Class KC, she was even recognised as being at the top of the class academically. However, she had failed to show her ability to comprehend more interpretive language and this gave rise to Ms Chapman's concerns for Abhi's future scholastic success. While these concerns were linked to her language ability, Ms Chapman did not explicitly connect these to Abhi being an emergent bilingual student. Abhi had also gained recognition for her social capabilities generally and her particular friendship with Tammy was noted by both teacher and parent alike.

As noted previously, Abhi's home language was only acknowledged once during the teacher interviews, when Ms Chapman recalled that Abhi's parents had indicated in their parent/teacher interview that they were anxious that she was losing her home language. However, twice it was inferred by the teacher to be an imaginary or created language, with no reference to having any merit or meaning. Also Abhi's linguistic capital was not referred to during class time in any of the observations. This is despite the class learning Japanese and having a specialist language teacher visit once a week for this purpose. The weekly Japanese lesson was held on Fridays, the same day that I attended for observations, yet that Abhi was bilingual or had particular linguistic expertise was not referred to, nor praised. During Term 1 Abhi was not able to gain recognition for her linguistic capital.

Hope: As emerged in the Askari family story, the Gopan family looked forward to their daughter's entry to the first year of school with excitement. Abhi proclaimed herself 'ready for school' and was happy to recount the minutia of her Orientation visits. Ramani stated that the only concern she had for Abhi was her ability to physically sustain the full time nature of school life. In the final interview, Ramani and Abhi were both still very excited about school. They recounted Abhi's successes, including making friends and being placed in a more advanced group for spelling. Ramani also referred to Abhi's love of reading.

Despite the teacher's allusion to poor outcomes in the Best Start report and her concerns about Abhi's ongoing language needs, Abhi and Ramani focussed on

Abhi's successes, playing down any difficulties that she may have had early in Kindergarten. Ramani noted that Abhi loved her teacher and that she was impressed by the teacher's care for her daughter and by her daughter's successful entry to Kindergarten.

Lappi/Lane

Family story

Lappi (Lane) was 5 years and 1 month in December 2010 when the first interview was conducted in her home (5 years 2 months when she entered school). At home, Lappi was known by her Pukapukan name, however when she entered school in January 2011 she was enrolled as Lane. Lappi lived with her mother (Anu) and father (Robb) and three older siblings: Akava (10 years old, male, Year 5 in 2011), Pabbi (8 years old, female, Year 4) and Wappi (7 years old, female, Year 3). Living with them at the time of the initial three interviews were two older female relatives, one was Anu's mother. These women did not appear to speak English and did not take part in our conversations, however they took part in family life during my visits, sitting with the children or undertaking household tasks. A fifth child was born into the Tuki family the day after the third family conversation. Robb jnr was present for the final family interview.

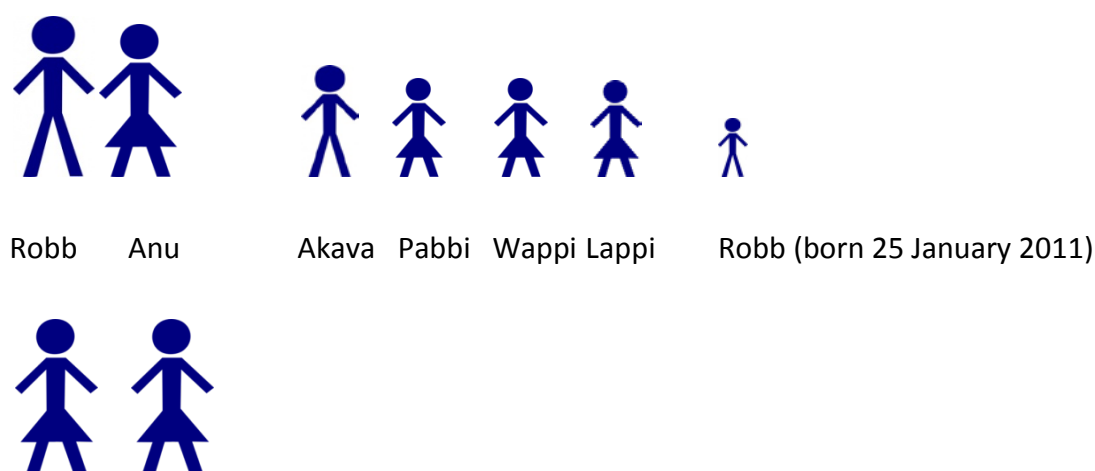


Figure 5.12 Tuki Family Participants

Anu and Robb migrated to Australia from Pukapuka separately before they met. Anu first spending six years in New Zealand, where much of her family still lives, she moved to Australia in 1998, aged 17. All of their children were born in Australia.

Pukapuka, a small island in the South Pacific, is one of the 15 Cook Islands.

Pukapukan is the name of the language spoken and her family at home. A number of languages are spoken in the Cook Islands and Pukapukan is spoken on just two of these islands. At home this family mixes Pukapukan and English as they converse. However, Anu noted that her own education on Pukapuka included instruction in English.

Kathryn Where did you learn English?

Anu Yeah... yeah... at school... 'cos we got English and other subject... but we write in English and all that.....

Kathryn From the beginning of school?

Anu Yeah and we read books – we got books to read in English too.

The school aged children in the Tuki family also attend a Community Language School (CLS) one afternoon a week in order to learn more about Pukapukan language and culture. During the first family conversation, Anu explained, 'Oh they just teach the kids speaking in our home language and how to write in our own language and mostly our culture' (FI – 21 December 2010). Later in the same meeting Anu noted, 'my kids love going to their language school, they always love that. They always love to learn their home language' (FI – 21 December 2010).

Robb worked as a security guard and Anu had undertaken home duties since the birth of their eldest child. When asked about her level of educational attainment, Anu was unsure how many years she had attended school in either the Cook Islands or New Zealand.

During our meetings Lappi was very shy and quite reserved. In the first meeting she spoke only 25 words. These included responding four times to questions with a singular utterance 'yep' and counting to five. While she did not show overt signs of excitement in having a visitor come to her home, as the other child participants had, she rarely left the conversation area (unlike her siblings) and she often simply came and sat next to me or included me in games she played. Lappi showed no

particular inquisitiveness about me and she did not refer to me by name, she once referred to me as 'the man'.

When discussing the prospect of school, Anu stated, '(Lappi's) looking forward to (school), yeah she can't wait..... she always says to me 'Oh Mum, I want to go to school'. And you know – 'I want to go with my sisters and brother'. And I tell her 'you wait and next year you go to school' (FI – 21 December 2010).

Anu didn't have any concerns for Lappi as they looked forward to the beginning of school. She stated, 'No, I haven't take her to school yet. I was just waiting for next year.... Downtown Public School – not far from here. Yeah (Lappi) know much about the school. And plus she's got one brother and two sisters to help her out... I'm not worried about that part' (FI – 21 December 2010). Later she added, 'I know one teacher and she has been there for how many years? And she is good. And it is always a happy school. My kids love going there' (FI – 21 December 2010). In the third family meeting, when I ask Lappi about school and having a new teacher, her sister, Pabbi, answered

Pabbi I think it's Mrs Fuller... because Mrs Fuller always teach Kindergarten...

Kathryn What's she like?

Pabbi She's really, really nice... (FI – 24 January 2011)

The flow of talk during the Tuki's family conversations was very slow with many long pauses, answers were short, little detail was offered by any of the participants. After each meeting I recorded my frustration with not being able to find topics that any of the family seemed particularly interested in. However, I did note that 'they were happy to see me, when I reached the front door they all came and called to me 'come in, come in... come and sit down' but nothing to talk about' (FI – 24 January 2011).

In preparation for the third meeting I took an Atlas. They had mentioned that they enjoyed reading, though I only saw two books in the living areas of their home; and they had all referred to their home on Pukapuka. So along with taking the photos from the camera activity, I also took my Atlas.

Anu Pukapuka (pointing to the island).. but Nassau and Pukapuka... same ...
we are the same.

Kathryn How far away are the two islands?

Anu Not too far, you only take a day to go there.

Kathryn By boat?

Anu Yeah

Pabbi Can I see? Mum, where is it?

Anu There (pointing again)... That's where we came from... it's only a small
island.

Kathryn (Lappi runs in with a t-shirt) Oh look at your t-shirt – it says Rarotonga

Anu Rarotonga is the main island of the Cook Islands. (She points for the
girls to see.) Yeah that's the biggest island in the Cook Islands.

Kathryn (after a pause) Can you tell me about the Islands?

Anu Yeah, there's 15 islands in the Cook Islands, but there's different
languages... (Lappi then leaps across the room disrupting the
conversation.)

Anu and her daughters became very engaged as they discussed the Cook Islands. It is noteworthy that this was the only time that Anu offered information without specifically being asked.

At home

The children played quietly together during each family conversation, Anu, who was 8 months pregnant in the first meeting, rested. As the January conversations played out, Anu appeared increasingly exhausted and uncomfortable due to the mid-Summer heat. These family meetings seemed quite drawn out and answers often included periods of silence. However, as Anu became less talkative her two older daughters, particularly Pabbi, stepped in to answer questions and ask their own. Most of the activity in the home took place in the lounge and dining areas. The TV remained on for most of two of our conversations with some children (or the older women) watching a mixture of the summer Australian Tennis Open and

children's cartoons. The children's activities were conducted on the floor of the lounge room.

Lappi's initial shyness lessened over the three meetings. However she continued to give single word answers and often ignored questions I asked. When Lappi ignored a question or answered in just one word one of three things occurred:

- Anu would simply repeat the question

Kathryn Lappi, can you tell me what your favourite toys are?

Anu (silence) What is your favourite toys?

- someone would answer for Lappi

Kathryn (Lappi is sitting with her baby cousin) What is the baby's name?

Pabbi Elle

- Anu would expand on Lappi's short answer

Kathryn What do you like doing with your Mummy?

Lappi Uhmmmmmm... watch TV

Kathryn Yeah? What's your favourite show?

Anu What is your favourite cartoon?

Lappi Uhm Diego... and Dora

Anu Yes they got their own show. Yeah, she learn a lot from there...
because they tell the numbers and they read books.

(Excerpts from FI – 17 January 2011)

In the third example given above Anu also rephrased one questions so that Lappi could answer the question I posed. This kind of support of Lappi's language occurred only once. Anu did not translate anything I said into Pukapukan at any stage, nor did she assist Lappi's comprehension of the conversation in any other way. Also Lappi did not request assistance.

During our meetings together several activities took place, all introduced by Lappi.

Jigsaw puzzles: In the second meeting, when I asked Lappi what her favourite toys were, this discussion occurred:

- Kathryn Lappi, can you tell me what your favourite toys are?
- Anu (silence) What is your favourite toys?
- Lappi Parzill (she speaks softly and we cannot hear her)
- Anu Parcel? (she laughs and looks at me) What is it... talk, talk
- Lappi PARZELL (in a loud, slow voice)
- Kathryn Getting a parcel? (pause) Do you have a parcel?
- Lappi Yep, down there (she points to the toy cupboard)
- Kathryn Can you show me?
- Anu Go get your toy... get your book.
- Lappi (produces a jigsaw puzzle) (FI – 17 January 2011)

The jigsaw puzzles that Lappi took out of the cupboard were part of a story book, which indicated that by her third utterance Anu understood what Lappi was referring to. Lappi proceeded to take out each set of puzzle pieces, name the Disney character it depicted and replace the pieces. While Lappi had trouble with pronouncing her favourite activity's name, she had no difficulty with executing each puzzle.

Guess Who? – When she had finished the puzzle story book, Lappi returned to the toy cupboard and found a different game to play. This game for two was a guessing game, using Nickelodeon cartoon characters on the cards. Lappi knew all the character names, she could easily attend to turn taking but she was not able to conduct the question and answer component of the game. The extent of her question asking was to name characters, however she was not able to identify the characters that I named and so she was not able to reduce the number of cards that she was guessing from in order to 'guess who'. Her sister, Pabbi, came and revealed Lappi's character, and so ended the game.

Computer use – During each of our meetings Lappi’s use of the family computer was discussed. Anu noted that after reading, Lappi’s favourite activity was to use the computer.

Anu Yeah – every morning, she always come first in the computer. She know it’s good. (FI – 21 December 2010)

During the second meeting Lappi agreed that using the computer was one of her favourite activities. While in the third conversation, when explaining one of the photos taken during the disposable camera activity, Lappi added a little about her computer knowledge:

Kathryn What are you doing (in this photo)?

Lappi Computer.. doing the watching computer...

Kathryn Can you turn the computer on and get the game going by yourself?
(Lappi and her mother both nod.) (FI – 24 January 2011)



Figure 5.13 Lappi using the computer

Other activities – It is interesting to note that while Lappi did not show evidence of having access to pencils, paper or workbooks (apart from producing one small piece of paper and a pencil in the third meeting), the photos that her mother took show all three girls colouring in and writing or drawing (Figure 5.14). There is also a photo of Lappi working in a workbook (Figure 5.15). Lappi did not discuss this during our time looking at the photos.



Figure 5.14 Lappi and her sisters drawing and writing at home



Figure 5.15 Lappi working in her workbook

Mother and daughter together – When asked about activities that Anu and Lappi liked to do together, the mother and daughter gave a number of answers. In the first of our meetings Anu noted, ‘she likes me to read to her... sometimes she reads the words to herself... but the words on the book is not right but she is reading.... She’s reading her own thing, she looking at the picture but the words on the thing is wrong, but she know...’ (FI – 21 December 2010). Later in the same meeting Anu added, ‘She always come to me ‘Oh Mum, read this one to me’. Finally, when I asked where the family accessed books for the children to read, Anu answered, ‘I buy book for them to read’.

During the second family conversation, Anu added, ‘(Lappi) likes cleaning the house... she help a lot. Yeah every time I do the dishes, she always come and help me... She like to play games and watch cartoon... and puzzles’ (FI - 17 January 2011).

Finally, I asked Lappi what she liked to do with her mother, ‘Uhmhhh ... watch TV’.

Family life - One of the striking facets of family life in this home was the part played by the older children in the family. Anu related that she expected her children to be caring and it was 'important to look after your kids, just want them to grow up and be good. Help Mum and Dad out...' (FI – 21 December 2010). She relied upon them to play together and to take care of their younger sister. Anu also noted that her children 'always help each other out' (FI – 21 December 2010). This was evidenced in the way that the older girls looked after Lappi throughout the meetings. Pabbi took part in setting up the game of 'Guess Who'; it was Pabbi and Wappi who worked out how old their mother was; and Pabbi often stepped in during the final meeting to answer questions or clarify answers that Lappi gave, as in this short interchange:

Kathryn Lappi, last time I was here your Mum said that you love swimming... (no reponse)... do you?
Lappi Yup
Kathryn Where do you like swimming?
Lappi I want to go to the little beach...
Kathryn Where is the little beach?
Pabbi The baby pool
Kathryn Oh, where is that?
Pabbi We go to the Fern Wood North Pool. We go where our cousins live, they live by the pool. (FI – 24 January 2011)

Preschool

Lappi did not attend preschool or any childcare prior to school. Anu noted:

Anu No... no... I didn't take her to preschool... (there is a long pause)... no because it was going to cost too much...
Kathryn ... they're expensive
Anu Oh, you know... once I take my son 'cos I only had two kids then, so I took my son... my oldest to preschool... just up there (she points up the road) and it was alright, it was alright... alright, the price there. But now... 'cos I got more kids to look after... and it's a bit hard for me to

take Lappi, you know, to preschool..... but she always want to go to preschool... but I say 'no'.

Kathryn So how did she know about preschool?

Anu Oh because my son always talk to her – he always tell her to go to preschool and ... it's a good thing... but you know... you gotta look the other way, you know? But I told her, it's alright, 'Mummy teach you at home.'

(FI – 21 December 2010)

Family expectations for the first year of school

Several times during the initial three meetings Anu referred to Lappi looking forward to school. The three older children attended Downtown Public School and Anu stated that she was 'not worried' about Lappi beginning school (FI – 21 December 2010). Anu also noted that Lappi had a friend, Isabel, who lived nearby, who was also beginning school. When asked about what Lappi was looking forward to, Anu stated:

Anu She looking forward to go play around, along with the other kids in there, you know... to meet other people

Kathryn What sort of things do you hope she will be able to do at the end of the year?

Anu I hope that she get... improve and that in writing and her reading and getting along with other people at school. You know, learning more... that's the sort of things I want for her.

(FI – 21 December 2010)

I also asked Lappi about beginning school:

Kathryn Are you going to big school soon?

Lappi Uhm small school... Kindergarten!

(FI – 17 January 2011)

Later in the same conversation:

Kathryn Lappi, what will you do at school?

Lappi Uhmmmmmmmmmm play

Kathryn Can you tell me what you'll play?

Lappi Uhm play games

Kathryn (a little later) What do your sisters do at school?

Lappi Nothing (Pabbi and I laugh)

Kathryn Fair enough, what will you do?

Lappi (after a long silence) reading

Anu (prompting) read the book.....

Lappi Read the book (FI – 24 January 2011)

Anu expressed a positive view of Downtown Public School, that it was a ‘happy school’. However Lappi did not express any opinion about beginning school.

Interpretive comment

Conversation in the Tuki household was filled with pauses and silences. Lappi, whether because she was the youngest child and relied on others to speak for her generally or because she had little English language to use or simply because she was shy, was often silent. Frequently, she answered with a single word or needed prompting by her mother before giving an answer. However, over time, Lappi revealed her interests, and in doing so she showed the skills that she had developed. Through game playing Lappi showed her ability to take turns; to name characters; complete puzzles; count; use books and draw with her sisters. Lappi liked to spend time using the family computer, on which she played games. She also showed that she was able to control the computer’s start-up procedure, use the mouse successfully and she had an understanding of computer procedures. Books, paper, pencils and other stationery were not obviously available to the children, though they were in evidence in the photos that Lappi and her mother took in the camera activity.

Movement to school: Orientation

Lappi did not attend the Orientation programme held by Downtown Public School in the year prior to school. Anu stated that Lappi had had exposure to the school through her siblings attending the school and so did not view this as a necessary

part of preparation for school. Anu had also decided not to enrol Lappi at school until the first day of term in 2011, the day before Kindergarten was to begin. However, Orientation was perceived by the staff of Downtown Public School as a key time to meet new students and their families.

Kindergarten: Term One

The Principal of Downtown Public School was pleased for his school to take part in the current project and we met informally on the first day of school (31 January 2011) so that he could hear about the project first hand. In my research journal I wrote,

It was plain that (the Principal) was very aware of the many and differing needs of the families who come to this school. Some 64% of the students attending are categorised as LBOTE. He broke this statistic down into three main groups – recent refugees (including those fleeing from civil unrest), (unskilled or semiskilled) migrants who have been living in Australia for a longer period of time but their children still need language assistance and recent migrants who come with academic qualifications (including international students).

The school was receiving special funding to assist the many children who had English as a second or subsequent language to be able to learn effectively in an English-medium school. The Principal noted that this funding was only for five terms and would finish during 2011. He stated ‘the Department deems this sufficient for children to be able to then compete with English-first children’. He voiced his concern for his school and explained that many of the students in his school required much more help to be able to ‘really compete’. One example he gave was that ‘recently the staff had realised that most of the children in the school did not know what a safety pin was, the term was unknown to them’. He questioned how children with such language needs could be ‘accurately assessed in national testing as currently exists’ (referring to NAPLAN). He noted that the school was in a low SES area.

Lappi was enrolled at Downtown Public School on the same day that her siblings returned to school (the day before Kindergarten began). She was enrolled as Lane.

Mrs Fuller and Class KF

Mrs Melissa Fuller – On 7 March 2011 I met with Melissa for the first teacher interview (all excerpts in this section are taken from this interview unless otherwise stated). Melissa graduated in 1994 from a regional university in NSW with a four year Bachelor of Primary Education. During her seventeen years at the school, Melissa had undertaken a two year distance course to qualify her as a teacher for the hearing impaired. Melissa described Downtown Public School, with around 240 students, as very diverse and changing. She noted that when she first began ‘it was 60 or 70% Macedonian, that’s no longer. There’s still Macedonians around but now it’s a real mix and a lot of new arrivals’. In reflecting on her relationship with the school and its community she stated:

‘it is like my family a lot of the parents saw me arrive as a prac student. Then they saw me here as a teacher. Then they saw me get engaged, get married, have my babies, so they know me and it’s lovely.’

Literacy and programming - When asked about her definition of literacy, Melissa responded that it was ‘everything we do, talking, listening, reading, writing and it’s all mixed in, everything we do in the morning (Literacy Block). It’s about learning to use language, written and oral. How we get meaning from language’. Melissa continued, this definition had ‘just developed over time... I don’t know that uni equipped me that well, to be honest. Since I’ve been here I’ve done numerous literacy programmes’.

Melissa noted that her school had taken up the use of Triple L in 2010. She stated that she really liked using this programme, especially ‘the 10 minute intensive time with the children, I think they get lots out of it’. However, Melissa added that she felt that the children who attend Downtown Public School also needed to have the fine motor skills programme that she had been using for some time. So in using Triple L, Melissa had added to it components of the fine motor skills programme

she had been using previously because ‘a lot of our kids have never held a pencil and they’ve got very, very poor fine motor skills... So gradually, now they’ve got the idea of the rotation I’ll start slipping in the literacy activities as well’. In the second interview Melissa noted that she found that her students required further assistance and in the latter half of Term 2 Melissa had decided to return to using a phonics programme (Jolly Phonics) in conjunction with Triple L, in order to teach letter/sound correspondences.

When asked about how she used school policy or prior training in planning her class programme, Melissa stated that she used the English Syllabus as the base of all that she did. She referred to Best Start assessment and the use of the ESL scales which she had been trained in, however Melissa noted that she did not use the Scales a lot because Kindergarten students ‘tend to pick it up quickly, I don’t think about them. I think it’s just getting them early and they’re just immersed in (language)... (after that) it’s probably my training in the hearing unit (that’s helped most)’. She also referred to using ‘speech cards’ to aid her students in learning ‘the way we have our tongues when we talk’.

Finally, Melissa noted that Orientation was the main avenue used, by the staff of Downtown Public School, to have contact with the parents of new Kindergarten students. In 2010 the school had run several meetings with tea and coffee provided and one session included a family barbecue. She had noticed ‘lots of ESL families came... it was very informal’. The school also provided interpreters and a specialist ESL teacher.

Interpretive comment

Mrs Fuller and the Principal both referred to the area that the school catered to as being a low SES area. This was reflected in the My School website statistics (see Table 3.2). Both staff referred to the high proportion of students who were English language learners. The outworking of these statistics in Mrs Fuller’s class programme appeared to be that it was geared toward students with poor literacy

and English language skills. While the Triple L programme was used in the classroom, other literacy programmes were also used to fill perceived gaps.

Class KF – By Term 1 Week 6, when the first teacher interview was held, Class KF had 18 students (6 girls and 12 boys). Melissa noted that around half of these children had not attended preschool. In this class there was a mix of ‘Macedonian, Serbian, Australian, Burmese, African, Cook Islanders and one new Arabic child’. Of these, several children were further assessed for ESL assistance and five gained access to ESL assistance outside the class and two more were to be monitored by the specialist ESL teacher on her daily visits to the classroom. Lane was one of the two children to be monitored in-class.

Classroom Observations

During Term 1 and Term 2, I went to Downtown Public School to observe Lane in her Kindergarten classroom eight times. I attended class from 9.00am to 11.00am on seven of those mornings, during the Literacy Block and once Mrs Fuller invited me for the Numeracy Block (11.30am – 12.45pm). This classroom was arranged similarly to the first two classrooms described. However, there was little wall space for literacy rich posters or artwork as the walls consisted of a concertina door along one wall, an IWB at the classroom front and one wall with large windows down its length. There was a small wire stand with a few books on it on one wall. During each session I had a clear view of both the mat area and the desks (see Figure 5.16 Classroom layout).

(A full account of the six classroom observations is given in Appendix J.)

Synopsis

The first classroom observation began with rollcall. For rollcall Mrs Fuller asked all the children to give a formal response. She would say ‘Good morning Name’ and the child had to respond, ‘Good morning Mrs Fuller’. In the second teacher interview Mrs Fuller noted that she felt it was important for the children to gain as many opportunities to speak as possible and that this included more formal

opportunities. Lane was able to do this, softly but clearly, from the first observation.

During the first two observations, the class broke into five groups for their literacy session based on the use of the Triple L program.

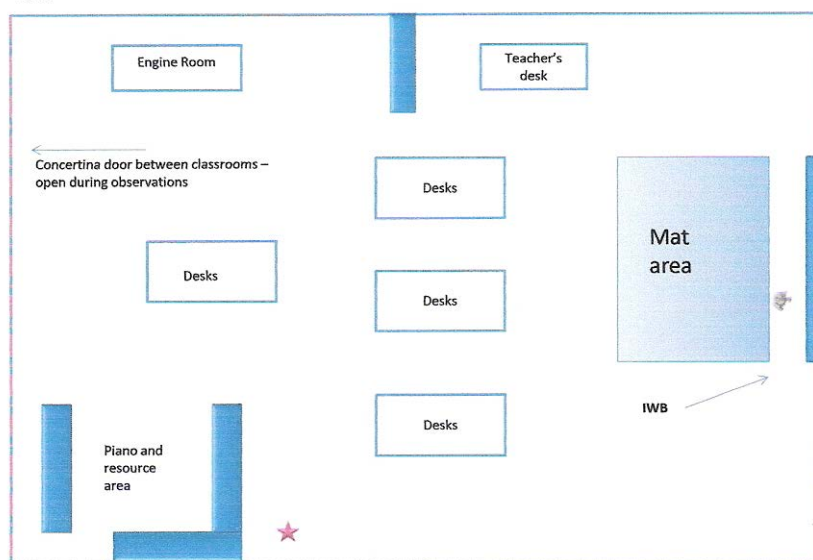


Figure 5.16 Classroom layout

Engine Room – When it was Lane’s group’s turn to move to the Engine Room the three children sat down quickly and the teacher held up a plastic letter ‘s’. She asked, ‘Who knows this letter?’ There was no response, so she continued, ‘/s/ like a snake. Who can write this letter?’ Mrs Fuller assisted Lane to hold her pencil and she wrote the letter ‘s’.

For the rest of this 10 minute session Mrs Fuller read a graded reader with the small group, *My Little Cat*. Each double page had one sentence and a picture – ‘My little cat is in the box.’ (or basket, bag, flowerpot, etc). First Mrs Fuller read the book to the group, she then asked the children to reread the book with her. She commended Lane, ‘Lane, you have a good memory’.

Big Book - At 10.15 the class gathered on the mat to read a Big Book (*The Monster’s Party*). On the final double page a monster decides to jump into a jelly, Mrs Fuller asked ‘What will happen when it jumps in the jelly?’ No one moved or

spoke, no hands went up. The teacher moved on, asking the children to do the actions that the monsters in the book were doing, jumping, dancing, singing, tooting a trumpet. Mrs Fuller then instructed the children to complete a tracing activity, to trace a sentence ['I can run.']. The class read the sentence together on the IWB and then looked at their worksheet, recalling the function of a full stop.

Next the teacher played a game with the children. She repeated the sentence beginning 'I can...' adding different endings – jump, touch my toes, touch my head, and touch my knees. Some children needed visual assistance in order to play but Lane was quick to follow.

In my reflection after class, I noted that the class was very noisy but much of the noise was coming from the class on the other side of the open concertina doorway. The concertina wall remained half open in every observational session.

Establishing her social identity – During the third classroom observation I realised that Lane was never alone. Of the three observed children she was the only one to consistently sit with other children. It was only in the third classroom observation that I noticed:

that the children sit in assigned places in the mat area, I had previously wondered why no one sat alone in this class. Lane sat at the front with a boy on one side and a girl on the other. (CO – 14 March 2011)

Growing literate practice – Whereas in the first classroom observation I noted that no one raised their hands to answer questions, nor did they answer questions, in the third classroom observation I recorded, 'today Lane raised her hand to answer every question' (CO – 14 March 2011).

Lane's ability to work quietly sometimes appeared to belie her literate ability as was evidenced as she attempted to complete a worksheet during the third observation:

Worksheet – The children received a worksheet and were sent to their desks to write their name. Mrs Fuller explained the activity. On the

right hand side of the worksheet were a number of pictures and next to each picture (on the left) were a set of instructions. The first read – ‘Draw three apples on the tree and colour them in red.’ I noted, ‘Lane sits and doesn’t draw anything until the teacher shows her what to do using another child’s worksheet. There is a class helper (ESL teacher) today, she is sitting next to Lane but is helping another student and doesn’t notice Lane’s difficulty.’

Lane finished this first picture and then turned to her neighbour and asked, ‘Can I be your partner?’

Mrs Fuller Look at the next picture on your sheet, can you see the crocodile? Can you point to the crocodile? Let’s read the instructions – you have to ‘give the crocodile four teeth and colour the crocodile green’.

This time Lane appeared to understand the instructions and she began work. She pointed to her work and said ‘four’, then continued. Elsewhere in the class a student didn’t know what ‘teeth’ were, and the teacher’s attention was taken with supporting this child’s efforts. When Mrs Fuller returned to check on Lane’s work she noticed that Lane and her neighbour had not placed teeth in the crocodile’s mouth. ‘Where are your teeth?’ she asked. Lane bared her teeth. Satisfied, Mrs Fuller moved off and the girls kept working. Later when I looked at Lane’s work, I saw that she had coloured the crocodile green and then written the number 4 all over his body... there were still no teeth. Lane repeated this in each subsequent part of the activity.

(CO – 14 March 2011)

In a class with such a high proportion of emergent bilingual children and with at least two children who were only just beginning to learn English, many activities in this class appeared too complicated. I wrote in my field notes ‘many children in the

class could not name their body parts. I wondered at the choice of this very ambitious activity.'

By the final classroom observation (CO – 9 May 2011) I noted a significant positive change in Lane's confidence and mastery of a number of letter/sound connections and a small number of sight words.

Speaking up – Linked to the third classroom observation was a clear example of Lane's ability to actively negotiate the support that she needed.

Lane finished this first picture and then turned to her neighbour and asked, 'Can I be your partner?' (CO – 14 March 2011)

This simple request was set to be repeated or acted out during each of the following classroom observations. Lane appeared to assess her neighbours and then either approached one of them to be her 'partner' or simply checked their work and then proceeded with her own.

During the final two observations, conducted in Term 2, Lane continued to work quietly and partnered with other children. In the seventh observation (the fifth with Lane present) children were asked to recount a weekend activity, which they found a difficult task. When it was Lane's turn she repeated the news of the child before her. This occurred again in the final observation, however Lane was able to answer a question about her 'borrowed' news.

By the final classroom observation held in Week 2 of Term 2 I noted:

(Lane) was also more consistent with raising her hand to answer questions. However, the praise that Lane received continued to be almost exclusively related to her quietness. In the final two observations Lane was praised four times for quietness and only once, as part of a group, for pointing to the correct letter when asked.

(CO – 9 May 2011)

Assessment at the end of Term 1 – The observed assessment of reading at the end of the first term included Mrs Fuller testing Lane’s book knowledge. Lane knew how to open up a book and she could point to where to begin to read.

Following this session Mrs Fuller stated that she had found that the Triple L program did not support her students well, noting ‘these children have an enormous gap and many don’t know either their letter names or sounds’. But she added, Lane was ‘coming along well... Lane knows some words and can point to them’. In Term 2 Triple L was conspicuous by its absence, Mrs Fuller had returned to using a phonics based program.

A point of interest was how few opportunities students had to interact across the observational period. While Mrs Fuller had twice mentioned her encouragement of the children to chat ‘on task’ while working, this had not been occurring. The children who complied with tasks tended to sit quietly; while, the children who did not complete tasks tended to be disruptive, throwing pencils or other equipment, interrupting other children. Conversely, there seemed few opportunities for children to be left out of the activity of the class, as was highlighted in the set seating arrangements on the mat, this appeared to aid class management and reduce isolation for new or shy students.

Reflections on transition to school

As with the first two narratives, following the classroom observations a second teacher interview was held and then a final meeting with Lappi/Lane and members of her family in their home. These meetings were held to reflect on Lappi/Lane’s transition to school. Lappi/Lane was included in the family conversation in order to capture her thoughts on her transition from home to school.

The view from school

Social success

The chief observation that Melissa made about Lane with regard to her overall presence in class during the first weeks of Kindergarten was of her quietness. In the second teacher interview she mentioned Lane's quietness seven times.

Melissa She didn't do a lot because, you know, she was so quiet and so shy...
 (she) was very quiet and reserved and didn't ... and didn't try.

This quietness was linked, in Melissa's responses, to Lane being a child who did not 'fuss', who had 'low confidence', 'needed reassurance' and that Lane repeatedly looked to the teacher or classmates to copy their responses when called on in class. When asked about forming friendships Melissa stated, 'it's taken quite a while because she's very, very quiet, she just sat back and (was) very quiet, following the others'. The teacher noted that this class (and Kindergarten generally) had very few girls in it. She added that in her class there were 'very few (language) role models' and this was particularly difficult for the girls.

Language

After the initial Best Start assessment, Lane was one of the children who was acknowledged as needing some extra language assistance. Lane did not qualify to be withdrawn from class for small group activities with the ESL teacher as five others did. However, she was one of two students who the ESL teacher focussed on her half hour classroom visit each morning.

Academic achievement

Lane's initial Best Start assessment report was not available for this study. However when reflecting on the assessment carried out in the first days of Kindergarten, Melissa stated '(Lane) would always have a go ... but when I was assessing her for her literacy, she didn't show me a lot'. Later when speaking more generally, Melissa noted that during the Best Start assessment the students were 'all too shell

shocked... it's a lot we're asking (of them)'. She went on to note that Best Start was 'a really nice way to meet with the child, on their own and find out about them and it does give you some information for the brighter ones.... It helps the bright ones. You do find out what they can and can't do and it follows on for them'. When asked where Lane was in that initial assessment, she responded that Lane was closer to the bottom, adding 'but the majority of them were'. Whether it was the 'shell shock' of school entry, issues related to language knowledge, lack of literate home practice or a lack of ability, many of the students in this class had failed to perform during the Best Start assessment, and Lane was one of these. However, by the end of Term 2 Melissa stated '(Lane's) starting to know her sounds... single sounds, she's starting to know some of our sight words that we've been concentrating on; she's reading about a level five or six... and she's definitely more confident to have a go'.

Transition

Melissa described Lane's transition to school as being 'without fuss. She just seemed to come because that's what you had to do and she just did it – she just had to fit in, she didn't make a fuss, she just came quietly'. However, this quietness, noted previously, was quite extended and Melissa stated that it was only in the final weeks of Term 2 that Lane was beginning to 'take control' of her school life. She related an event where Lane had been part of a group of nine children who were given a number card each, with a number from 1-9 on each. The children were asked to arrange themselves in numerical order. Melissa noted 'some of the kids weren't quite following the game' but 'Lane got up and was telling the other kids where to stand.... She took control, and that was just lovely to see.... That's the first time I've seen her take control'. According to Melissa, it was a rare view of Lane's numeracy skill, of her control of language and social acumen.

Relationship with Lane's family

Melissa was asked to reflect on her relationship with Lane's family. Initially, she stated that she had 'met with mum in the past, (though) not much this year'.

Melissa added that she had not realised that the family had a new baby and she did not know of the parents' educational background or anything about their employment. However, she spoke of Lane's brother and sisters being the ones who brought Lane to school and picked her up in the afternoons from class, adding 'it's the sisters and the brother that take care of her'. They were also noted as being responsible for ensuring that Lane brought in notes on time. Melissa stated that this was a big issue in her class where 'a lot of the parents are very ESL at home.... I'm ringing parents because I won't let (the children) miss out (on anything)'.

Class KF students took readers and sight words home to practise each night. Melissa stated that some children did not return these or did not practise with them at home. When asked about Lane, she responded 'her book always comes back but it's not always written in, so I don't know whether it's been read at home'. She noted that 'there's quite a community of them ('real ESL families') here now.... But I mean Lane's not too bad because the older brothers and sisters (help)'.

Interpretive comment

Overall, Lane's transition to school was characterised as being 'no fuss'. She was viewed as a quiet, hardworking student. While not one of the top students, she demonstrated her growing knowledge through classwork. Despite being described as one of the students requiring ESL assistance, Lane's ability to communicate in more than one language was not referred to during the teacher interviews. Praise for Lane's attitude or scholastic abilities was mostly limited to her compliance rather than growing understanding. This was also noted in the classroom observations. Finally, there was a lack of familiarity with Lane's family background.

In a class where almost half of the students were assessed as needing language support and where there were a large number of students who needed assistance, Lane's quiet compliance was regularly registered by the teacher and other classroom visitors through their praise. However, it appeared that Lane failed to establish her identity further than this in the first two terms of school. During the

two interviews, Melissa did not mention any of Lane's character traits, interests or abilities which had been demonstrated in the family meetings. Lane's interest in puzzles or her ability to use a computer or play turn-taking games, were not acknowledged in her Kindergarten classroom which had no access to computers.

The view from home – the final family conversation

Returning to the Tuki's home was delayed for several months as it was again difficult making contact with the family. When we met all the family was home. I presented Lappi with a small book. Lappi went straight to the other end of the dining table and began reading. She read the book through four times our meeting.

Academic performance and language competence

Lappi, who had been almost silent during the prior-to-school conversations and had also been almost silent during the first term of Kindergarten, demonstrated more confidence in this final meeting.

Reading her gift – Prior to the beginning of school, Anu had stated two of her hopes for the end of Kindergarten were that Lappi would be able to read and that she would make friends at school. In the recording of this final family conversation, Lappi's readings of the text are clearly heard in the background to the conversation I was having with Anu. She read with her finger pointing to each word, when she came to a word she didn't know she simply stopped and waited for assistance.

Lappi	See the (pause)
Anu	Lion
Lappi	lion in the jungle. (pause) I can see (pause)
Pabbi	it
Lappi	it too.
Anu	Good girl!
Lappi	See the giraffe in the jungle. I can see (pause) a
Anu	No (pause for 10 seconds) it

Lappi it too. See the bird in the jungle. I can see it too.

Anu or Pabbi offered Lappi the word she needed each time she stopped. Lappi did not request assistance and they did not encourage her to try other decoding methods.

Academic success – During the second teacher interview, Mrs Fuller had referred to Lane as being a student nearer the bottom of the class, academically. However, the mid-year school report had been a source of encouragement to Anu. Reflecting on the report, she stated,

I wasn't expecting Lane's report. She had a good report. (pause) Yeah, I was happy with it.... She's not as shy. She can do reading by herself (pause) you know I have to help her, tell her which word is that (pause) but now she know how to read it by herself.

Later she added, 'And plus she get, you know, in her report, (it says that) she get along well with the children at school'. These three mid-year outcomes aligned exactly with the particular hopes that Anu had expressed for her youngest daughter during our initial conversations and she summed up her views of Lappi's academic success by stating, 'I'm happy with what she's doing. Yeah. She learning!'

Introducing a topic of conversation – Minutes before the end of our final family meeting Lappi did something for the first time in our visits together, she initiated a conversation. After an interruption to our conversation Lappi began:

Lappi That's a picture of me (pointing to a baby photo of her on the wall).

Kathryn You were a smiley baby!

Lappi And they're my brothers (she points to photos of each of her siblings).
 And that's my sister, Wappi. This is Peace (Pabbi's school name).

Kathryn You might need a new photo.

Pabbi Oh Robby boy!

Anu Yeah (laughing)

Lappi I was happy on there.

Kathryn Yep – you were a happy baby.

In this selection, for the first time, Lappi was able to initiate conversation and she was also able to continue to contribute when others joined in. This showed her comprehension of the activity of the conversation and her ability to interact with multiple partners.

Community Language School – Of the three child participants, Lappi was the only one to attend a Community Language School (CLS) during the data collection phase of this project. Having expressed her satisfaction with Lappi's entrance to school life and acknowledging that Lappi was more talkative (in English) than she had been before school, Anu went on to discuss Lappi's attendance at the CLS for the Pukapuka language. Anu noted that Lappi and her siblings attended CLS weekly on a Monday after school. However Anu also noted, 'I'm trying hard with speaking Pukapuka. She can understand but she can't speak it now.... But we always speaking it to them. (pause) Yes, she can understand me but she can't say it out'.

Lappi's initial prolonged silence (in English) in school appeared to have been echoed or perhaps followed by a silence in using the Pukapukan language. However Anu was undaunted by this as she recognised that Lappi, while not being able to produce her home language at that time, was still able to understand what was being said. Interestingly, this had also been Mrs Fuller's experience in class. Lappi could understand classroom interaction but could not produce English responses during much of Term 1.

Social success

In Mrs Fuller's Kindergarten class there were only six girls and Lappi spent time with each of the girls in the class though she was, as Mrs Fuller described, 'very quiet'. She appeared to ignore the boys in the class. During the final family conversation Lappi stated that she had a lot of friends and named three girls in her class. Anu also noted that Lappi was not as shy as she had been prior to school and

that she now had a lot of friends, referring to the school report which had stated that Lappi was 'getting on well with the children at school'.

Transition to school

Discussing Lappi's transition to school with Anu was quite difficult, the initial weeks of Kindergarten were quite hazy as she was in hospital and then home with a new baby, however she noted that Lappi was 'so excited to be there'. She also explained that her older children had played a significant role in Lappi's transition to school – 'they always help her out with her school, reading. (pause) They always help each other'. Anu's overall appraisal of Lappi's transition was that it had been smooth. Anu noted that she was happy with Lappi's progress, she was 'learning a lot at school'. Anu added that she based much of her assessment on the parent/teacher interview and midyear report.

After talking to Anu, I asked Lappi about what she thought of school.

Lappi I like doing some drawing (long pause) and I was colouring (pause) neatly.

Lappi added that she liked playing handball with her friends. However Lappi's reticence to speak or perhaps, lack of comprehension, rendered some of her attempts to explain her transition to Kindergarten less valuable.

Kathryn Can you tell me about your teachers? (pause) What are they like? (long pause) Are they kind (pause) or friendly?

Lappi (long pause) friendly.

Interpretive Comment

Anu's feedback regarding her daughter's transition to school was completely positive. She stated that her daughter liked school, was excited to begin school and that she had made friends and had her siblings to help her if needed. Lappi's statements were still quite embryonic however she was quick to demonstrate her new found reading skills and persisted with reading and rereading her new book.

In Lappi's narrative, there is recognition of an initial silent period during transition. There is also a noted period of silence in her home language.

Summary of Lappi's/Lane's story

This third narrative, that of Lappi Tuki and her family, includes data collected from family conversations, teacher interviews and classroom observations. The summary again depicts common themes that became apparent across the collected data.

Identity construction: One of the most striking aspects of life in the Tuki household, as revealed in the family conversations, was the communal nature of their life. Three times Anu referred to the responsibility that the children had towards each other and toward their parents to care for and help each other, she noted 'that's what we teach them all the time' (FI – 18 November 2011). As our meetings played out over eleven months I was privileged to see these statements lived out. It was interesting to hear this reflected by Mrs Fuller, when she twice referred to Lane's siblings as being responsible for ensuring her safe movement to and from school and for the return of school notes.

The second aspect of the Tuki family's identity that was revealed was the importance of their home island, culture and language. The children all attended the Pukapuka CLS, from Kindergarten. Anu stated that this important part of their family identity was one that they all enjoyed and she was concerned about Lappi's loss of home language since beginning school. Anu noted that Lappi could still understand Pukapukan but was experiencing a prolonged silent period in the home, despite her efforts.

At home with me, and later in school with her teacher, Lappi/Lane quickly established her identity as being very quiet. In the home, prior-to-school, Lappi was reticent to speak during my visits, was consistently called on by her mother to answer my questions and wherever possible appeared to allow others to speak for her. This left open the question of whether she was shy, uncomprehending or

unable to undertake answers in English. Over time she did, however, reveal that she was a competent game player, loved puzzles and had a clear understanding of the use of the family computer.

In school, while Mrs Fuller recognised her quietness as a prolonged silent period, she also acknowledged Lane's comprehension of English as she consistently called on her to answer questions in class and gave her jobs to do. However, it was not until the day before the June teacher interview that Mrs Fuller noticed that Lane was beginning to 'take control' of her activity in the classroom.

While Lane's extreme quietness in class led to consistent praise for her compliance, it also led to a prolonged period required to establish herself in a friendship circle, though she got on with classmates. Lane was also slow to establish her identity as a literacy learner. While her transition was characterised by her teacher as being 'no fuss', she consistently needed teacher assistance in literacy activities and when that was not available I observed her looking to fellow students to be 'partners'. It was not until the end of Term 2 that Mrs Fuller noted that Lane was beginning to learn letter/sound correspondences and some sight words.

However, in the final home meeting, Lappi immediately established her identity as a reader in the active role she took when given a new book. This change was further reflected in Lappi's confidence to begin a conversation in the final family conversation.

Best Start and the needs of the emergent bilingual child: Mrs Fuller described literacy as an interactive process involving reading, writing, speaking and listening and that it was 'how we get meaning from language' (TI – 31 January 2011). She went on to explain that Best Start was an assessment tool she used. Overall, Mrs Fuller saw two major benefits that sprang from the use of the Best Start initial assessment. Firstly, the brighter children could be assessed and then monitored. Lane was assessed as being 'nearer the bottom' of the class and 'didn't give much' (TI – 22 June 2011) during the initial interview. However, Mrs Fuller noted that the majority of the class fell into this category and she had found that many of the

children in her class were just too 'shell shocked' to be able to perform. So, the assessment period also allowed teachers to have valuable one-on-one time with each child in order to get to know them.

Lane was assessed for ESL assistance. She received extra assistance in class from the ESL teacher. Both Mrs Fuller and the ESL teacher were careful to scaffold Lane's learning when they were available. However in a class with so many language learners and a number of children with behavioural issues, during observations Lane was often left to work out strategies for finding her own support, repeating other children's news items or checking a neighbour's work when unsure. These strategies were successful and revealed an element of resourcefulness.

Apart from the in-class ESL aide's assistance, there was no mention made of Lane's first language competence. No mention of her skills as an emergent bilingual child. In a class, where many languages were known, there was no mention made of any of the children's linguistic competence other than aid being given for poor English skills during any of the eight mornings of classroom observations. In its activity, in the wall charts and posters and in its talk, Lappi's classroom was strikingly monolingual.

Capital and deficit: Lappi's home life was resource rich in terms of language capital. Both English and Pukapukan were valued in her home and the children all attended the CLS, so as to learn more about their home language and culture. Anu noted that the children were able to use both languages. While Lappi was all but silent during the initial family conversations, she clearly showed understanding in both languages.

However, in other areas this home did not appear resource rich. I did not observe many books, pencils or other stationery, toys or games during my visits. Also Lappi was not able to attend preschool. Anu had noted that she had consoled her daughter about this, saying 'but I told her it's alright, Mummy teach you at home' (FI -21 December 2010).

Anu and Robb also decided not to enrol Lappi early nor to send her to the school Orientation programme as they felt that they had a good knowledge of the school through their older children's attendance. However, when Lane began school, Mrs Fuller noted that her language proficiency (in English) was low and that Lane was 'very quiet'. As stated above Lane's extended silent period upon entering school detracted from her ability to make friends. Her lack of knowledge of the school may also have added to her 'shell shock' during the Best Start assessment.

Throughout the classroom observations Lane's quiet compliance, while attracting a significant amount of praise from more than one teacher, also reduced the knowledge that Mrs Fuller was able to gather about her. Added to this, the lack of interaction between Anu and Robb and Mrs Fuller left the teacher with only a vague understanding of Lane's family and background, information invaluable to any teacher. The picture built by Thompson (2005) of a child entering the school grounds with a virtual backpack filled with their prior to school home 'capital' is a picture that, if applied to Lappi, would show that backpack remaining tightly closed, unexplored, with the literate and language skills that this child brought to school unseen.

Hope: Anu and Lappi both saw school as a place where they hoped that Lappi would meet other children, play and learn. Further Anu hoped that reading and writing would be activities that Lappi would succeed with. During the final family conversation it was apparent that Lappi had succeeded in establishing friendships, naming three friends; in learning to read, she read her gift book; and in her ability to initiate and undertake a short conversation which included interactive revelation and response. Anu revealed her pleasure in Lappi's school success as she commented on her midyear school report. Anu stated that Lappi had shown that she was not so shy and was now able to read by herself.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter was broken into three major sections, each section revealed the story of one of the child-participant's in this research project. Each narrative included

data from and analysis of prior-to-school family conversations, teacher interviews, classroom observations and a final family conversation. At the end of each narrative, a summary highlighted the main themes apparent. In revealing the lived experiences of these three children and their families during a period of transition, each family's home literate practices were also examined. Hearing the voices of the participating families allowed a sense of the depth and richness of the experiences of these children and their families. Using an interactionist paradigm in this narrative study was critical as it provided space for the voices of even very young, emergent bilingual children and their families to be heard. To date the research community has pointed to such as these as silent, voiceless, a mere grouping, vulnerable or under-researched; in this project, a space has been cleared for these children and their families to use the voices they already have, to express opinions, to give narrative evidence of their lived experience, in order to open up their experiences to closer observation.

In the next chapter, Chapter Six, there will be a discussion of the themes highlighted in this chapter and a drawing together of themes from across the family stories, in light of current literature and with consideration given to the research questions posed at the beginning of the study.

Chapter 6

Reflecting on stories of transition: Discussion and conclusion

Reflecting on stories of transition:

Discussion and conclusion

Very few research designs address multiple perspectives, and some of the voices of children and families that perhaps most need to be heard, especially to shed light on how less favourable transitions can be improved, are underrepresented in research findings. New approaches to research may be required to gain access to these perspectives.

Peters, 2010, 4

Introduction

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of emergent bilingual children as they made the transition from home to school. In doing so it addressed the following two research questions:

- *What are the lived experiences of the emergent bilingual child-participants as they make the transition from home to school, with reference to their home literate practices and preparation for school?*
- *How are the capital that each child brings to school and their identity negotiated in the Kindergarten classroom, with reference to family activity, teacher practice or school policy?*

The literature clearly shows that literacy learning develops from birth and is supported through home practice prior-to-school (Bourdieu, 1977; Britto, Brooks-Gunn & Griffin, 2006; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Dickie, 2011; Espinosa, 2007; Gregory, 2006; Heath, 1983; Hill et al, 1998; McNaughton, 2001). Also, recent research has found that where a child's literate practices, learned in the home, are recognised or activated in the school context, school outcomes for that child are improved in both the short and longer term (Drury, 2007; Gonzalez et al, 2005; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Sammons et al, 2008; Spyrou, 2011; Thomson, 2002) and so

teacher knowledge of these practices is imperative (Cairney, 2002). However, there is acknowledgement that teachers are often unaware of practices in the homes of children labelled as 'minority' or 'children of diversity', those not deemed to be from the mainstream (Cairney, 2002; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Cummins, 2005; Feiler, 2005; Molyneux, 2009), that is, not 'middle class, White, ethnic majority students' (Christ & Wang, 2008). Doucet and Tudge (2007) found a 'pervasive assumption' among teachers 'that minority parents are not as involved in their children's education endeavours' (316), viewing these children as less well prepared for school and less socially competent (also Christ & Wang, 2008). This doctoral study recognises that research investigating the lived experiences of emergent bilingual children in a period of transition is, therefore, research worthy, as the literature revealed a certain dissonance between findings about teacher knowledge of emergent bilingual children's experience and preparation for school and their actual lived experience prior-to-school. Informed by a Symbolic Interactionist paradigm (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003), the current study undertook to explore how the participating children and their families negotiated their identity and capital in school in order to present a further insight for key stakeholders.

The current project took up the calls for further research that is contextual and interactionist, by investigating participants' everyday activities (Doucet & Tudge, 2007) and their own voices (Dockett & Perry, 2003; Groundwater-Smith, 2011). Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 2011; Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003) frames the investigation of children's transition, negotiation of capital and identity; and broadly reflects the tenets of Bourdieu's work related to the notion of capital (Bourdieu, 1997; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and Gonzalez *et al's* (2005) funds of knowledge; in order to explore the child-participants' prior-to-school lived experiences and how these were then negotiated in the classroom. Using the lenses outlined in Chapter 4, the artefacts gathered have been used to underscore the conversations recorded. By this means an insight into the lived experiences of each child and their family can be opened up to practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders.

The previous chapter restoried the family stories of children in transition. It included conversations in the home, artefacts and play, insights from their teachers and observations made during the first term of Kindergarten (the first year of school in New South Wales). The data, analysed through the six lenses outlined in Chapter 4, revealed these children's and families' lived experiences; interpretive comment was added for clarity to draw the parts of the story together. The presentation of the collected data highlighted the voices of each participant: child and adult; family member and teacher; with especial focus on the voices of the child-participants and their families. This mosaic approach, drew together many diverse parts in order to present a snapshot of each child's transition (Clark & Moss, 2007). With each site explored, each stage of the narrative opened up for examination the ways the children and families prepared for and experienced the beginning of formal education in the Kindergarten classroom and how these children negotiated their capital and identities in the classroom.

Examining the home activity and context through ongoing dialogue with the child-participants and their families (Britto *et al*, 2006; Cairney, 2002), revealed how home and school literacy experiences connected during transition to school. In this study the depth and breadth of contact in both settings provided insights into interaction within the family, and between home and school. The significance of this qualitative study rests largely on its answering these calls for further research through carefully crafted narratives which open a window onto a mosaic of lived experiences linked to the early home learning environment and transition to school. In exploring and working to understand the three family narratives of transition, this study highlights the movement and change in the lives of the young emergent bilingual children to a monolingual educational setting, noting the children's and families' efforts to negotiate and activate their social, cultural and literate capital in the school setting (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The outcomes of this study aim to inform and challenge teacher beliefs and practices, as well as inform policy and, it is hoped, inspire further investigation.

Therefore, how language learning and literate practices were enacted by the family, observed by the researcher and negotiated in the school setting during transition is research worthy. Home literate practice and other preparation for school will be discussed in the next section. The second section will address how the child-participants negotiated their capital, and therefore their identity, in the classroom. Implications of teacher knowledge will also be explored as the second research question is addressed. The final section of this chapter will draw together concluding remarks, recommendations and implications of this study.

What are the lived experiences of the emergent bilingual child-participants as each makes the transition from home to school, with reference to their home literate practices and preparation for school?

The limited research which explores and reveals the lived experiences of young children in their homes, particularly those who are bilingual, as they make the transition from home to school was noted in the literature review (CEIEC, 2008; Clark & Moss, 2011; Drury, 2007; Molyneux, 2009; Parke & Drury, 2001). This period of transition to school has been revealed to be pivotal for every young child as success in this period has been linked to later academic and social success in both the short and longer term (Arnold *et al*, 2008; Bang, 2009; Cummins, 2005; Young, 2003).

Recent research has also highlighted the need for further investigation of parent involvement in pre-literacy activities with their children prior-to-school (Arnold *et al*, 2008; Cahill, 2003); especially for bilingual families (Clark & Moss, 2007). Particularly, there have been calls for in depth, contextually based research in the homes of young children around transition to school (Cairney, 2002; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Drury, 2007; Feiler, 2005; Jones Diaz, 2003; Katz and Redmond, 2009; Parke *et al*, 2002; Spyrou, 2011).

In answer to these calls for further research, this study highlighted the lived experiences of the child-participants, especially their home literate practices in the

prior-to-school years. The main focus was on the period leading up to the beginning of school. These practices were reflected in the talk and activity of the family meetings. Significantly, these practices included language use across more than one language.

Research conducted into understandings of emergent bilingual children's lived experience has often been inextricably linked to outcomes for children with low SES backgrounds, with these studies linking minority and low SES status to poorer scholastic outcomes (Christ & Wang, 2008; Margetts, 2007) and reflecting the 'pervasive assumption' highlighted in work by Doucet and Tudge (2007). This study, by investigating both the home experience and school transition, disrupts some of these assumptions. Therefore, in order to set the scene for discussing the lived experiences of the three child-participants in this study, it is vital to outline both the educational background and attitudes to education of the participating parents.

Parental attitudes to education

Commitment to the benefits of education can be shown in many ways. In this study it was found that four of the six participating parents had attained postgraduate qualifications (including two of the three mothers), indicating their personal commitment to education. Sammons *et al* (2008) argued that parents', and more particularly mother's educational attainment has been found to be a predictor of children's school readiness and educational outcomes (also Britto *et al*, 2006).

Furthermore, all three mothers stated that education was important for their daughters; each of the families made statements linked to, and gave examples of, how they were actively preparing the girls for school. With all three mothers fully employed in the home, this time-rich adult input is noteworthy as the literature has pointed to parents as the 'first teachers' (Britto *et al*, 2006). That is, that parent educational input prior-to-school is an important factor in educational outcomes for their children. In addition, children's specific understandings of literacy,

developed prior-to-school, have been directly related to later literacy outcomes (Young, 2003).

In addition to their own educational successes and aspirations and the willingness of these parents to spend time with their daughters, each of the three families gave indications of their family's interest in their children's education:

- Anu spoke very positively about school and stated that her older children loved both their local government school and their language school. Anu and her husband sent their children to a community language school to learn Pukapukan culture and language. She stated that this part of her children's education was a high priority for her family.
- Raabia's family spoke extensively and strenuously, across the first three home meetings, about the importance of education to them personally and nationally. Omar, Raabia's father, revealed the place of education in their home country's history. Both parents related that government's policy of 'education for all' and their hope that all of their children would complete both school and university. Education in English was also viewed as an additional benefit for Raabia, an advantage when they return to their home country.
- Abhi's parents explained that they spent a lot of time and effort preparing their daughter for school. Ramani's attitude to the education of her children was encapsulated in the statement – 'we dream of giving them a good education but it's up to them what they... want to do' (FI – 17 December 2010).

In the final weeks before school commenced the three families voiced their hopes and concerns for their daughters' first year of school. Interestingly none of them were fearful of their daughter not coping with the school work that would be undertaken. Abhi's mother was concerned about her ability to cope physically with school, as she was young; Raabia's parents expressed fears that her lack of English may hold her back from social development; while Lappi's mother stated that she was not concerned for Lappi as she would have her siblings at school. For all three

families their aims for Kindergarten were that their daughters would make friends and be able to read in English by year end. Each family indicated their commitment to their daughter's education, through their positive attitudes to school, their hopes for good social and scholastic outcomes and their home activity to prepare their daughters for the language and activity of school.

Through the data collected the parents revealed their attitudes to education as they showed a commitment to each girl's education: in their positive attitudes to school; careful preparation for school; and in the family's ongoing attention to homework during the first term (this will be further discussed later in this chapter). In two of the three families, parents (Abhi's mother and Raabia's father) consistently sought advice from preschool and/or school teachers on the best way to support their daughters' education. All three families built a relationship with the classroom teacher. Additionally, it was revealed in the family meetings that their positive attitudes to education were not confined to the mainstream education system. These families also included further educative possibilities to be gained in the home and in community language schools through language and culture acquisition in their home or heritage language and culture.

Research finding: A positive orientation to school and fulsome support of their children's education was evident in each family, regardless of their individual characteristics and resources.

Language learning

Many researchers have found that bilingual children competently participate in multilingual and multiliterate practices in their homes and communities (Drury, 2007; Jones Diaz, 2003; Kelly *et al*, 2001; Molyneux, 2009; Reyes, 2012).

Additionally, Parke *et al* (2002) argued that their data revealed that many bilingual children had greater literate abilities than their current capacity in English enabled them to demonstrate and that these additional abilities often remained hidden when children entered the monolingual school context (also Cummins, 2005; Gonzalez *et al*, 2007). Analysis of the collected data provided information in relation to the range of language and literacy practices conducted in the homes of

the participants. These findings augment previous research about the important role of the home context in both language and literacy learning (Gearon *et al*, 2009; McNaughton, 2001; Reyes, 2012).

During family meetings with the child-participants in their homes, all three were observed to be supported in their early language and literacy learning by their parents, additionally Lappi had support from her extended family including older siblings. All three girls were learning English as their second language though each family employed different methods for language learning.

Abhi's and Raabia's parents stated that they were working to introduce English prior to entry to school while continuing to encourage development of their home language. For Raabia, who had only lived in Australia a short time this was particularly important to her parents. She and her parents spoke freely about their joint efforts to learn English and of being learners and teachers of English together. They related their joint roles as language teachers and learners, with Raabia clearly stating that she would become her father's language teacher once she began school. Raabia was already able to demonstrate her ability to translate Arabic into English when she repeated her parents' discussion in the midst of conducting a conversation with me (in English) during one family meeting. Additionally, Shazia spent time with Raabia teaching her English and Arabic letters and numbers, drawing together and playing.

In Abhi's home, language was used according to the activity being undertaken, this reflected Abhi's parents' own upbringing, using their home language for personal matters while being educated in English medium schools in India. Likewise, for Abhi relational matters were discussed in their home language, Malayalam (eg. talking to family members in India, religious activity); while school and literacy related tasks were undertaken largely in English (literacy and numeracy games, bedtime reading). Abhi was also sent to preschool, swimming lessons and dancing lessons in order to encourage her English-language acquisition.

Lappi, the only child-participant born in Australia, used her two languages interchangeably at home. Lappi's mother referred to the languages as being 'mixed together'. In Lappi's home emphasis was placed on promoting their home language and there was a lot of talk about, and time spent in, attending their Community Language School in order to maintain and nurture use of their home language.

All three families stated that they hoped that their children would be able to maintain both their languages, with Ramani summing up, 'I want (Abhi and her sister) to grow up knowing our culture... and the language. We want them to know our language ... so they can communicate' (FI – 7 December 2010). Each family undertook activity to promote the learning of their home language. This included ongoing social interaction with relatives and friends in Australia or overseas in their home language; literacy activities and games in the home; and attending a community language school. All three families stated that their vision of education for their daughters was not limited to education in English.

Contrary to previous study outcomes, the findings of the current study clearly indicate that these bilingual parents' were committed to preparing their daughters linguistically for the school environment. Their efforts related to school readiness with regard to language learning were consciously undertaken for up to 18 months prior to entry to school.

Research finding: Language learning, both home language and English, was seen to be important to each family and all the families actively prepared their child for the linguistic environment of the school.

Literacy activity in the home

The research previously cited established that prior-to-school home literate practices and experiences have a direct impact on later scholastic success (Gearon *et al*, 2009; McNaughton, 2001; Reyes, 2012). The current enquiry explored and revealed the home literate practices of the three emergent bilingual child-participants and their families. The collected data showed how, in each home, the parents took part in activities with their children. Mostly these activities were

observed between the girls and their mothers, as the meetings were often held at times when the fathers were away from home for work. In Abhi's and Raabia's homes their fathers also played a significant role in their family literate practice as they supported their daughter's language learning and took part in reading with the girls. Abhi's mother noted that her husband read to their children every night at bedtime. This was one way the parents shared the task of offering assistance to their daughter in language learning. In Lappi's home her father's role and activity was not observed or discussed partly due to his absence during the first three home meetings, however the role played by her three older siblings was significant as they played with her, taught her the use of the computer and shared books. Lappi's older siblings also modelled the importance of schooling as they spoke positively about their own experiences in school, particularly recalling positive relationships with their Kindergarten teacher, Mrs Fuller, who also became Lappi's Kindergarten teacher. While much of the family research outlined in the literature review highlights the significant role that parents play, this study notes that in Lappi's case, older siblings have also played a notable part in her preparation for and transition to school.

The observed activities across the three homes included some or all of: talking, reading, writing activities, drawing, colouring in, using the family computer, TV, DVDs, learning letters and numbers, playing games and puzzles, attendance at classes and preschool – all in English. All three families referred to reading story books together regularly as a priority. Abhi's family visited the local library on a weekly basis, while all three families revealed that they bought books for their children to read or work in. All three families related stories of activities that the girls liked to do with their mothers, one important activity in all homes was cooking. All three families discussed the girls cooking with their mothers and two girls took photos of this activity, Abhi gave a detailed recount of ingredients (naming and giving amounts), method and cooking outcome during a family meeting.

The particular activities recalled or conducted during our meetings included:

- Raabia's mother used notepads and number books to teach her daughter numbers in both English and Arabic. Raabia and her mother often spent time drawing and colouring together. Shazia had taught Raabia to be able to understand spelling in both English and Arabic, she could write her name in English from either spelling. Raabia could recognise and name some letters, she knew the names of colours. She also had access to the family computer.
- Abhi was the only child to attend preschool, where activities were strongly literacy related. These activities were also reflected and taken up at home, with Abhi's mother purchasing workbooks for Abhi to read and work through. She explained that she placed a high priority on Abhi being a self-motivated learner. During our meetings prior to beginning school, Abhi demonstrated that she knew all the letters of the alphabet, she could write them, read them and make the associated letter/sound correspondences. She also had a limited number of words that she could read when she played reading games. Abhi was not learning to read or write in Malayalam prior to school.
- Lappi's mother, who mentioned that she had not been able to afford preschool for her daughter, added that she had promised her daughter that she would 'teach (her) at home'. Lappi's school preparation consisted of reading with her mother, learning numbers and letters from TV shows like 'Dora the Explorer'. The family played games and puzzles together. Lappi also spent time drawing and colouring with her older sisters.

In Raabia's and Abhi's homes the parents openly discussed with me and with their children the upcoming beginning of school and that they were each preparing their daughter for school. During our meetings each girl practised pre-literate and literacy-related activities, including reading books and writing. Abhi and her mother prepared activities to share during our meetings which included reading games and workbooks. While Raabia, in 'show and tell' style, continually brought into our meetings books, notebooks and pencils, and puzzles to share. These

unplanned activities clearly indicated Raabia's parents' intentional work toward teaching their daughter literacy skills prior-to-school.

In Lappi's home there were not so many resources evident during the observational periods. Lappi, due to her great reserve, was less forthcoming and did not pre-prepare or share many activities. In those activities that she did share, she was less able to demonstrate her expertise either practically or orally. However, Lappi demonstrated confidence in using the family computer at every meeting, she was able to turn the computer on and set up the games she wanted to play without assistance.

The findings of this study stand in contrast to the 'pervasive assumption' of teachers found by Doucet and Tudge (2007) that minority parents were not as interested in their children's education as their majority counterparts. However, Heath's (1983, 449) study revealed that 'despite socioeconomic, racial, and linguistic differences, families... were engaged in meaningful purposeful literacy activities' and Compton-Lilly (2009) added to this that parents identified ways to support their children's learning. The current study, one of only a few to be undertaken in an Australian setting, revealed similar results. In analysing the stories of preparation for school, home literate practices and activity designed by the parents to prepare their daughters for school were stated to be a high priority for each of the families. So while there were differences in the home activities conducted, the amount of time spent in each activity and access to community activities, all of the parents in this study stated and demonstrated their commitment to actively preparing their daughter for entry to school.

Research finding: Home literate practice was revealed, in each home, to be a priority with parents and older siblings actively preparing the child participants for school.

Identity construction at home

In preparing their daughters for school, each family was also continuing the process of identity formation with their daughter. Symbolic interactionism views identity

as co-constructed, negotiated, emergent (Jensen, 2011; Riessman, 2008; Vyrant *et al*, 2003). Identities are revealed in the stories people tell about themselves (Riessman, 2008). They are formed through the process of socialisation which necessarily begins in the home. Therefore, revealing activity in the home context is vital to any understanding of identity formation in young children and a fertile setting for investigation. Home activity is highlighted around and within the negotiated symbols of interaction, the stories told by the parents and children, and the artefacts shared, revealing the co-constructedness and richness of identity, during a period of transition.

Identity is revealed in the small stories of everyday life (Andrews *et al*, 2008; Bamberg, 2006). Throughout our family meetings in each household the families and children told stories of their preparations, hopes and aspirations linked to the girls' upcoming entrance to school. Andrews *et al* (2008) argue that the small stories told reveal how people build their narratives, revealing their identities. Examining these then permits a study of emerging identity and change over time and context.

Raabia's father took a great deal of time to recount stories of his country's efforts over many centuries to uphold education as a national priority. His stories were teaching stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) bringing light to aspects of the family identity as well as a national identity. The family spoke openly about being teachers and learners. Omar had been learning English intensively in preparation for beginning his doctoral study. Shazia and Raabia completed many activities together that introduced skills the parents' deemed necessary for school entrance. While Raabia related that she would be able to teach her father once she had learned English at school. In this family, learning was an important aspect of life; it was equally important for adults and children; and every member was understood to be a responsible participant. Raabia's confident, outgoing personality reflected her understanding of herself as an important actor in the family's home literate practice and language activity. She showed her ability with both English and Arabic, through discussion and her ability to translate her parents' conversation.

Though her parents noted that she had established no ongoing friendships with children outside the home prior-to-school she was encouraged to interact with me and she applied herself to relationship building in this context.

Likewise, Abhi showed great confidence in expressing her views and interacting with me, a new-comer to her home. Abhi's parents also held a high view of the place and necessity of education and this attitude toward education was part of the socialisation that Abhi experienced and participated in through the activity and talk of the home. Ramani encouraged Abhi to be an independent learner, providing her with access to resources and activities inside and outside the home, such as workbooks, children's fiction, gardening and cooking activities. Abhi showed her independence as she initiated activity during the family meetings and as she shared her reading and writing skills; she also showed that independence as she took control of the learning process actively seeking language assistance as she required it. Through activity outside the home (preschool, dancing and swimming lessons) Abhi acquired many social skills as well as language competence, the confidence gained in these settings also contributed to her identity development. Abhi's most direct statement revealing her identity as a girl preparing for school came at our final meeting where she shouted, 'Yesssss! I'm ready for big school!' (FI – 22 December 2010).

Lappi, who appeared more reserved when compared to the other two girls during the family meetings, did not often reveal insights into her identity through her talk, though she listened to her family members interacting with me. Rather she allowed glimpses into her identity through activity. Lappi invited me to participate in activity as she presented games and puzzles for us to share. These revealed her interest in play with others and her many social skills. In the family discussions Anu described Lappi as part of a family who valued their cultural and linguistic background and valued education.

Language is inextricably linked to identity development (Vyrant *et al*, 2003). We use language to define and redefine our emergent identities, in context, through stories told (Bamberg, 2006). It is an ongoing process linking behaviour and

meaning-making through face-to-face contact (Vyrant *et al*, 2003). Present identities are revealed through talk, confirming the claims that we make about ourselves (Andrews *et al*, 2008). The children and their families in this study revealed their identities through language and, where language was lacking, through activity. With each site explored, each family narrative opened up for examination the ways the children and families prepared for the beginning of formal education, through home literate practice and language preparation in the home. The family meetings highlighted the revealed identities of the children and set the scene for revealing how these children actively negotiated their home identities in the new school context.

Research findings: A significant aspect of this study was the time taken to investigate identity through language and activity in the home; and how revealed identity in the home was then negotiated in the Kindergarten classroom.

The second section of this chapter will discuss how the child-participants negotiated their identities, including their cultural and linguistic capital, in the classroom through their own language and activity or that of their parents during their transition to school.

How are the capital that each child brings to school and their identity negotiated in the Kindergarten classroom, with reference to family activity, teacher practice or school policy?

Having established the capital that each child brought to the school setting in responding to the first research question, this second question investigates how the children negotiated their home literate practices and other cultural or linguistic capital in the classroom. Lareau & Horvat (1999) argue that each person has capital but that the value of that capital depends on the social setting. In order for that capital to be given value, it must be activated. Institutional actors (eg teachers) play a crucial role in 'accepting or rebuffing the activation of capital' (Lareau & Horvat, 1999, 48) of children and family members. It is in examining the capital

these children bring from home and the methods they employ to negotiate their capital in the school setting that is crucial to answering this second research question. As each child entered the school context she had to negotiate orientation programmes and the use of the assessment tool, Best Start, as her entry point for schooling. In addition, these three children negotiated teacher beliefs and classroom practice in order to establish their social and learner identity. During this period their parents also had to establish their identities as they negotiated the home-school relationship. Exploring the children's and families' lived experience of transition and the teacher's perceptions open up this period of identity formation for exploration.

The literature review noted calls for studies which explore the interaction between home and school (Feiler, 2005), with a focus on the perspective from the home and during a period of change (Doucet & Tudge, 2007). In concert with these, researchers have noted concerns regarding lack of teacher awareness in areas that included: understanding or knowledge of home literate practice, especially in the prior-to-school period; and language competence in home language and English for emergent bilingual children (Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Heath, 1983; Hill *et al*, 1998; Parke *et al*, 2002). This study responded to these calls for further research, through thorough investigation of both the home and school contexts, family and teacher understandings as well as through restorying the lived experiences of the child-participants.

The main points stemming from the collected and analysed data, used to answer the second research question are:

- Negotiating Orientation: the first point of school identity formation
- 'Best Start' assessment
- Negotiation in the classroom: activating or ignoring capital
- Home/school relationship: establishing parent or family identity
- Term End: identity negotiated, capital activated?

Negotiating Orientation: the first point of school identity formation

While transition to school generally begins in the home, with families introducing the topic of beginning school to their young child, the first point of contact with school is often as part of an Orientation programme (Broström, 2005; ETC, 2011; Liu, 2008). In Australia, these programmes frequently include invitations to children and families to visit the school in the year prior to the commencement of formal lessons. It is during Orientation that, for the first time, families and particularly their children encounter school culture. Researchers of school transition have noted that there can be significant and long term impact on the academic and social success for young children where there is a significant match or mismatch between home and school cultures (Margetts, 2007; Smythe & Toohey, 2009, McNaughton, 2001).

Transition, for bilingual children, especially those who do not attend preschool, was found to be even more significant (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001). However, where strong relationships were forged between educators and families, where families' and children's capital was acknowledged and valued, better academic and social outcomes were evident (Dockett & Perry, 2001; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Murry & Herrera, 2008; Perry *et al*, 2007). Sanagavarapu and Perry (2005) add that where 'the needs and expectations of CALD children and parents' (45) are taken into account stronger links can be made also resulting in better long term outcomes (Bang, 2009). Critically, however, in an Australian study by Jones Diaz (2003), she warned that only around one quarter of teachers in her study engaged with parents about issues related to language learning or development.

As noted in the findings, only Abhi and Raabia took part in orientation programmes. Both girls recounted their experiences, stating that they had enjoyed the programmes. During Orientation, Abhi liked meeting the upper primary children who would later become her school 'buddies' and she recounted the teacher's interaction with the new students verbatim. Raabia, who had not attended preschool, was very excited about receiving a letter from her school, inviting her to Orientation, and enjoyed meeting and playing with other children;

while her parents were impressed with the programme which included a family BBQ evening, classroom activities and parent sessions. Omar, Raabia's father, was also relieved to have an opportunity to approach a teacher with his concerns regarding his daughter's language needs. Raabia's parents recalled how much they had learned about schooling in Australia during the parent sessions.

However, the teachers' responses regarding orientation related to their opportunities to assess the new students rather than the opportunities they had gained to build relationships with students and their families. Ms Chapman noted that Abhi had been reserved, quiet, 'not really wanting to speak up'. It was this perceived shyness that was the reason given for Abhi's class placement. During the teacher interviews, no connection was made by the teacher between Abhi's quietness and her position as an emergent bilingual child, recently arrived in Australia.

In Raabia's case, Mrs Cooper's strong initial reaction was to the young girl's behaviour during orientation, regarding it as 'non-compliant'. This judgement was the first assessment of Raabia and was a pivotal moment in her early attempts to establish her identity at school. Raabia was placed in a class based on her recorded poor behaviour during Orientation. She then had to negotiate this label during the first term of Kindergarten in order to establish herself as other than this initial judgement. From data collected during the teacher interviews, for both girls, their class placement was based on their Orientation behaviour, without the teachers making any further enquiries or meeting with their parents. Following Orientation, when the school year commenced, each child received an initial literacy and numeracy assessment in the form of Best Start.

Research findings and recommendation: The data collected revealed the efforts the two families made prior to the commencement of school and the lack of opportunity either family had to interact individually with the teachers in their new schools during orientation. One recommendation stemming from this study is that schools afford teachers of Kindergarten classes opportunities to meet with families individually so as to be better informed of their educational and other interests

prior to the beginning of the school year. This affordance would significantly enhance teacher knowledge of incoming students.

‘Best Start’ assessment

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 noted that it is incumbent upon teachers to become familiar with their student’s academic, social and linguistic skill sets so that these might be better understood and valued in the classroom (Cairney, 2002; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Feiler, 2005; Gonzalez *et al*, 2007). Molyneux (2009) stated that there is often a failure by teachers to affirm the funds of knowledge or capital that bilingual students bring to the classroom. As if in answer to these calls the New South Wales government implemented an assessment of all children entering Kindergarten which aims to assess all children and then to continue to track their progress from Kindergarten to Year 3. Every child entering Kindergarten in New South Wales state schools is individually assessed in the first week of Kindergarten by their classroom teacher using an assessment tool called the *Best Start Kindergarten Assessment* (Best Start).

Best Start is ‘intended to ensure that all students are on track in their literacy and numeracy learning by Year 3’ (DEC, nd). It is claimed to be ‘inclusive: all children have the opportunity to participate’ (DEC, nd). Parents are informed of the initial assessment and ongoing use of the Best Start programme through a number of communiques from their child’s school that highlight the inclusive nature of Best Start and explain the ways the outcomes are used in ongoing assessment by classroom teachers.

As outlined in the introductory chapter of this thesis, Best Start is intended to identify the literacy (and numeracy) knowledge that each child brings with them to school. Furthermore, parents are informed that the literacy assessment component will aid teachers in developing ‘effective learning programs that build upon what the students know and can do when they start Kindergarten’ (DEC, nd). On the website, examples of the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment questions are given. Areas of assessment include:

- Recognise familiar print in the environment

- Recall details about a picture story book that has been read to them
- Write their name
- Understand how books work
- Recognise and use sounds and letters (DEC, nd)

However, for the three child-participants in this study, each of their teachers revealed that the initial school assessment did not yield helpful results. Ms Chapman pointed out that Best Start is ‘very prescriptive... it’s run exactly the same for every child... I knew a lot of the questions I was asking, (Abhi) didn’t even comprehend’ (TI – 24 February, 2011). Scripted examples of the questions teachers can use are available on the Best Start page. One such example is:

- Recognise and use sounds and letters

‘to determine if students can recognise and use sounds and letters the teacher may point to three pictures (a door, a dog, a cat) and say: ‘Listen as I say these words. Tell me the words with the same first sound.’ (DEC, nd)

Abhi, able to read, write and sound out the whole alphabet at home and who had additionally shown an ability to read a small number of words during game play prior to school, was unable to exhibit any of her home learned literacy skills during this intensive, initial assessment at school. Ms Chapman stated that, as a result, the initial report sent home was sometimes ‘confronting for parents’ (TI – 24 February 2011).

Similarly, Mrs Cooper, Raabia’s teacher, noted that Raabia ‘got zeros in Best Start for everything... she just didn’t have any idea what to do’ (TI – 6 June, 2011).

Raabia who had shown that she was able to write her name at home and understand spelling in two languages, had been able to write some numbers in two languages and count in English prior to school, during our home meetings, had not been able to perform any assessment requirements during the prescriptive Best Start assessment.

Finally, Lappi (known as Lane at school), who had not attended Orientation and so was completely new to school on her first day, had also not been able to perform

during the Best Start Assessment, Mrs Fuller stated, 'she didn't show me a lot' (TI – 22 June 2011). Also noting the prescriptive nature of the assessment, Mrs Fuller made three points about its use. Firstly, that in her class, with more than half of her students having English as a second language, many students were 'too shell shocked (to perform)... it's a lot we're asking of them' (TI – 22 June 2011). She related that Lane had achieved a low score and that she was 'closer to the bottom' of the ranking. Mrs Fuller went on, 'but the majority of them were (at the bottom)' (TI – 22 June 2011). Secondly, Mrs Fuller outlined that the benefit of using Best Start as an assessment tool was that it was useful for 'the brighter ones... you find out what they can do... and it follows on for them' (TI – 22 June 2011). Here students who could perform during this initial assessment were labelled as 'brighter' and these students were deemed to benefit the most from both the assessment and program as a whole. Finally, Lane's teacher explained that Best Start was invaluable because it offered the teacher much needed one-on-one time with their new students, time 'to find out about them' (TI – 22 June 2011).

Although, during our home meetings, all three children had demonstrated different types of literacy and numeracy skills, these skills were not observed by the teachers during the mandatory assessment conducted upon entry to school. At this point of contact they were labelled as not able to perform, and their home literacy practices in more than one language remained invisible to their new teachers. While one teacher noted the assessment as an opportunity to get to know her new students individually, the other two found the assessment to be prescriptive and unproductive.

In 2008, all Australian governments endorsed a set of goals for Australian schools in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young People (2008) which recognised that all students had the right to high-quality inclusive education (Winch *et al*, 2011). They agreed that effective assessment included an understanding of students' needs and abilities. However, the inclusivity alluded to in the DEC's outline of Best Start, that 'all children have the opportunity to

participate' in the assessment (DEC, nd), does not appear to reflect the goals of the Melbourne Declaration (2008).

Miller (2011) suggests that alternative assessments must be designed and implemented for students who are struggling with the language and literacy demands of the curriculum. In opening up the initial assessments for children with literacy and numeracy skills that cross linguistic boundaries, the cultural and linguistic capital of all students may be recognised in the new setting. While educational policy demands equity in assessment, investigation of children's prior learning and an understanding of home practices; and while teachers recognise the shortfalls of standardised assessment practices; little accommodation was seen to be made to highlight the capital of emergent bilingual children, as this assessment period was conducted exclusively in English without reference to home practice or context. The limitations of any prescriptive assessment tool that fails to take into account the backgrounds, skills and abilities of the students being assessed does not answer the calls for equity noted at the beginning of this section (Cairney, 2002; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Feiler, 2005; Gonzalez *et al*, 2007).

Recommendation: Taking into account the uneven playing field that any initial assessment presents children who are not able to perform (for whatever reason) it is imperative that all children have the opportunity to reveal their home literate practices, skills and interests in a manner which respects their particular background and accommodates difference. For many children this accommodation may well be found in individual home visits where time is taken to 'get to know' each prospective student and family members prior to initial school assessment.

Negotiation in the classroom: activating capital or capital ignored?

To be of value, capital must be noticed and activated in a given setting (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Thomson, 2007). In a new context, the negotiation that takes place between actors will establish whether capital is noticed, activated or ignored. Where capital remains unnoticed or ignored it is harder for the possessor to activate. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argued that students who have capital that is deemed to be more valuable in the school setting have greater educational

success than those whose capital is deemed to be less valuable. So it is crucial to understand the role of teachers in the activation of capital (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Research has shown that in Australia school curriculum continues to be more congruent with the experiences of

children from middle-class homes than for other children... teachers tended to have more pedagogically useful information about these children than others... (with many teachers assuming) that students could make the connections between home and school on their own (Hill *et al*, 1998).

Similar results were also been found in other English speaking countries, with teachers being found to make pervasive assumptions about the capital (or funds of knowledge) that students brought to the classroom based on socioeconomic or cultural foundations (Compton-Lilly, 2009; Doucet & Tudge, 2007). Additionally, teachers were often found to blame children of cultural and linguistic diversity for their personal deficit, rather than giving credit for existing capital, including linguistic knowledge, skills and understandings (Compton-Lilly, 2006, 2009; Cummins, 2000; Young, 2003).

Linguistic diversity has always been evident in Australia, with some 350 languages being spoken in Australian homes (ABS, 2007; Jones Diaz, 2013). School is a key site for the legitimization of language practices (Lo Bianco, 2009), therefore as young bilingual children move from home to school, the value placed on each child's linguistic capital will validate or ignore this capital, giving or removing legitimacy in the new setting (Jones Diaz, 2013).

Issues related to the education of bilingual children, long called 'minority issues' have remained at the margins of educational reform despite the growing numbers of bilingual students in Australian public schools, even where these students are in the majority (Cummins, 1997; Gearon *et al*, 2009; Jones Diaz, 2013; Margetts, 2007; Miller, 2011). Therefore, legitimating a student's home language as a cognitive tool and home literate practice, as part of their capital, affirms that student's identity

(Compton-Lilly, 2006; Cummins, 2009) and necessarily adds to academic and social success (Gearon *et al*, 2009; Kennedy, 2006). Compton-Lilly (2009) and Dickie (2011) demonstrated that where teachers built on student's capital, making connections between home and school practice, educational outcomes were enhanced.

Consequently, classroom practice and school policy play a vital role in the acknowledgment of student's capital. Addressing this issue for bilingual students, Cummins (2009) noted that recent changes in educational methods do not so much forbid the use of a student's first language as 'ignore its existence altogether' (318; also Gonzalez, 2005). Literacy practices in languages other than English are frequently overlooked (Molyneux, 2009) with teachers typically viewing knowledge of additional languages as irrelevant and, importantly, 'an impediment to the learning of English and overall academic achievement' (Cummins, 2005, 585). In such settings, students 'understand very quickly that the school is an English-only zone and they often internalize ambivalence and even shame in relation to their linguistic and cultural heritage' (Cummins, 2005, 590). As early as the first classroom observation, I recorded Raabia using English exclusively, even when playing alone, reflecting Cummins' (2005) findings that students very quickly come to understand the classroom as a monolingual setting. Where school policy or classroom practice ignores students' capital, outcomes for these students are reduced until such time as their capital is accepted and activated or their skills match the expectations or prescriptions of the classroom.

All students, upon entering the school setting, activate their capital (or attempt to) therefore close inspection of moments of activation will provide 'a more accurate picture of how social reproduction occurs' (Lareau & Horvat, 1999, 48). In this study, observation in two settings allowed for capital to be noticed in the home and then observed to see if and how it was activated or negotiated in the classroom. As has been revealed in the previous chapter, each child-participant was able to demonstrate understanding and use of two languages in their home setting as well as expertise in a number of literacy skills in at least one language during our

meetings. However, when the three girls entered their Kindergarten classroom, their home languages were ignored or disregarded. At no point during my observations was their linguistic capital acknowledged, referred to or praised by any of the teachers.

For Abhi, her teacher referred to her early use of her home language in the classroom as 'made up', that she had simply created words. While Ms Chapman did acknowledge later that Abhi's parents were concerned that their daughter was losing her home language, she did not link the two issues during her interviews. In a twist, Abhi's school, while not having access to an ESL teacher, did employ a specialist Japanese teacher. So although Abhi was assessed as having English language needs, and although her parents reported concerns regarding a loss of home language competence, she was also being encouraged to take up a third language in the school context. Cummins argued,

we are faced with the bizarre scenario of schools successfully transforming fluent speakers of foreign languages into monolingual English speakers at the same time as they struggle, largely unsuccessfully, to transform English monolingual students into foreign language speakers (2005, 586).

In Abhi's case, taking on a third language in the school setting, while being exclusively taught in English, appeared to be at the expense of her home language. Also although the benefits of learning Japanese were discussed each week I was present in the classroom, Abhi's expertise in her home language was not mentioned.

Lane, repeatedly referred to as 'very quiet' by her teacher, appeared the least active in negotiating her capital in the classroom. Perhaps this reflected a certain shyness or perhaps she simply took longer to establish her identity in the classroom setting. That Lane did not attend preschool or the school Orientation programme may have contributed to this. However, Lane did demonstrate her agentic nature in a number of ways:

- through initiating friendships with other children, she was chosen to be a new student's 'buddy';
- by negotiating assistance, highlighted when she was unable to gain adult assistance she asked her neighbour 'Can I be your partner?';
- by the end of Term 2 Mrs Fuller was able to declare that Lane was beginning to 'take control'. This idea of taking control included three aspects necessary for success in the school setting – academic skill, language expertise and social acumen.

Raabia's initial labelling was particularly negative. She was noted as being 'very ESL'; she was also labelled as a 'behaviour problem' and was placed in a class based on this assessment. However, at home Raabia was a friend-maker, and she activated this identity at school as she engaged students one-on-one in play and as she negotiated a toilet visit for a boy in her literacy group (CO – 16 February 2011). Her initial strident behaviours were observed to be quickly replaced as she gained more confidence in English and in classroom life. Mrs Cooper soon began to notice Raabia's kindness in sharing her possessions. While Mrs Cooper noted these changes she attributed them to Raabia 'learning what to do and how to behave' in the school setting. However, home observations revealed that Raabia had not learned these behaviours at school rather that she was learning how to activate her home identity in the school context and in a second language. For Raabia, activating her home practices or having her capital recognised and valued in school took time and persistence; and negotiating these further, to show her ability to take charge of a situation took longer still. Altering the teacher's initial understandings of Raabia's school identity required a great deal of effort despite Mrs Cooper's observed willingness to negotiate with her students.

Studies of student failure often highlight mismatch or lack of recognition of capital (Anderson *et al*, 2008; Drury, 2007; Thomson, 2002). Cairney's (2002) call for research to be undertaken that explores and highlights school successes for 'language minority' or bilingual students is crucial in understanding what is possible for students with diverse capital which may not match the mainstream. The child-

participants in this study did show their agentic nature as they negotiated and activated their home capital in the new setting. This negotiation necessarily required the students to act with confidence in the classroom, altering the initial assessments made, through their persistence. It also required that the teachers were willing to negotiate their first impressions and accept the negotiated change, altering the power dynamic between them. While the language medium did not alter; and there was no acknowledgement of the linguistic capital possessed by the emergent bilingual students in the classroom; and classroom instruction still favoured a middle class, monolingual orientation; the three teachers showed ongoing willingness to reassess the students in their care, as the students acted in the classroom. Again this highlights the messiness of real life. A final crucial element in the negotiation of capital and identity for these children was the active participation of family members to initiate and engage in the home school relationship.

Research findings: Significant to this study were the efforts each child made to reveal their home identities in the school context and to negotiate the initial judgements that the teachers made concerning them.

Home school relationship: establishing parent or family identity

Many researchers have identified that one aspect vital to smooth transition to school is the nature and quality of relationships built between home and school, though Murry and Herrera (2008) argue that this critical relationship ‘remains one of the most neglected aspects of professional preparation for preservice and inservice teachers’ (206). These researchers also contend that a strong home school relationship is one of the predictors, in fact a ‘crucial determinant’ of later school success (Lareau, 1987, 73; also Arnold *et al*, 2008; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Drury, 2007; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Kelly *et al*, 2001; Smythe & Toohey, 2009). By parent-teacher interaction researchers included quality of the interactions, number of contacts as well as parent participation in school activities (Arnold *et al*, 2008). In some studies, teachers were seen to interpret parental involvement as a clear reflection of the value parents placed on education and success in school (Cairney

& Munsie, 1992; Feiler, 2005; Gonzalez, 2005; Lareau, 1987). Parents who failed to become involved in school-approved ways were frequently judged by teachers to be less interested in their children's education (Feiler, 2005). Doucet and Tudge (2007) noted that even a hesitation to become involved could be misinterpreted by teachers as a lack of interest, this, they argued could be more difficult for parents who had English as their second language. Again Murry and Herrera (2008) identified that one of the pervading myths relating to the development of the home school relationship was that culturally and linguistically diverse families had less to contribute to the school environment and academic success of bilingual students. Compton-Lilly (2009) argued that teachers often wrongly assumed that these parents, as well as those from poor backgrounds, were not interested in or did not care about their children's scholastic activity or outcomes (also Heath, 1983; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

Further Lareau (1987) argues that schools have 'standardised views of the proper role of parents in schooling' (73) and that these views are heavily dependent on social class and ethnicity (Compton-Lilly, 2009; Margetts, 2007). The literature also shows that where there is a mismatch between home and school activity, expectations or cultures, transition is more complex, less smooth (Christ & Wang, 2008; Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Margetts, 2007; McNaughton, 2001) and students are more likely to be judged, in the school setting, according to class or ethnicity stereotypes (Doucet & Tudge, 2007).

In line with the aforementioned research findings, there is a growing body of research that foregrounds the vital nature of bi-directional interaction between home and school, and highlights the importance for teachers to become aware of home practices through building relationships (Compton-Lilly, 2009; Dickie, 2011; Drury, 2007; Gonzalez *et al*, 2005; Gregory, 2006; Parke *et al*, 2002). This has been found to be more strategically beneficial where the teacher's and the family's cultural and linguistic backgrounds are at variance (Drury, 2007; Gonzalez *et al*, 2007). Additionally, Molyneux (2009) argued that, where there was difference between home and school cultures for bilingual students, with a failure to affirm

the capital of bilingual students, this must be redressed through recognition and respect. In these studies, the onus for action is moved to the educators to become learners, respecting parents and children as experts in their home context and partners in the educative process (also Cairney, 2002; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Compton-Lilly, 2009; Gregory *et al*, 2006; Hill *et al*, 1998; Heath, 1983; McNaughton, 2001; Murry & Herrera, 2008; Parke *et al*, 2002; Smythe & Toohey, 2009). Central to this call for change, is the notion of respect. Compton-Lilly invites teachers to rethink their 'assumptions about students and their families' (Compton-Lilly, 2009, 449). Cairney (2002) notes that teachers must become familiar with family practices and design ways to incorporate these into classroom practice for education to be equitable for all.

Despite these calls for bi-directional activity between home and school, the current study found that all parent-teacher contact mentioned by families or teachers, was initiated by the parents or siblings (in Lappi's case), with the exceptions of written notes and reports sent home from school and the parent-teacher interviews held mid-year. Mrs Cooper noted that Omar, Raabia's father, initiated contact by making a point of speaking with her daily, asking how Raabia was going in class. During the second teacher interview, Mrs Cooper admitted that she did not know the parents' educational background or employment; while Raabia's parents reported that they did not know of the ESL assistance the school provided. However, they had built a relationship of respect, with Mrs Cooper acknowledging the parents' many efforts to support their daughter's scholastic progress. The final statements by Mrs Cooper described Raabia as doing very well, that she was very confident, and 'absolutely gorgeous'. Arguably, Omar's efforts may have helped to position Raabia as a keen learner by showing his interest in her education as he daily approached the teacher.

For Lane (Lappi) the interaction between home and school was no more than notes, reports and one parent-teacher interview held mid-year; Lane had not attended the school's Orientation program and neither parent had been available to enrol her in school. Mrs Fuller viewed Lane's three older siblings as the

intermediaries who conveyed her messages home to Lane's parents. When asked about interaction between home and school she deflected with general comments about many 'ESL kids' not participating in school activity. This included home readers not being read or the readings not being recorded on the provided sheet and that notes for excursions were often not sent back to school, though Mrs Fuller added that Lane's siblings' did bring her notes in regularly. During Lane's transition to school her parents, Anu and Robb, had not formed any relationship with their daughter's teacher; and Mrs Fuller did not know or could not recall any details about them.

The relationship built between Abhi's parents and her teacher was instigated by her parents, who stated that they felt free to visit the school any time they had questions. When asked, Ms Chapman noted that as the school was built on a very steep hill, without easy parking, it was difficult for parents to visit with teachers. However, they both noted that they had had contact.

Despite the lack of teacher-driven relationship building, the parents were uniform in their positive appraisal of their relationship with their daughters' schools and their praise for the girls' teachers. All three mothers stated that they felt positive about their daughter's transition to school; Ramani stated that she felt free to visit Ms Chapman whenever she had questions; Anu spoke very warmly about Lane's entry to school; and Shazia was clearly pleased with Mrs Cooper's compliment to her about Raabia, that she was 'at the top of the class'.

As stated above, the home-school relationship has been found to be critical to school outcomes. In this study, teacher participation in building relationships with the participating families was completely dependent on the pro-activity of the families. Each family took up opportunities to initiate and continue interaction with their child's teacher throughout the transition period. It is noteworthy that the teachers' were clearly seen to be heavily invested in supporting and promoting good educational outcomes for the children in their care; this included some acknowledgment of the efforts the families exerted to assist their child in keeping up with school work.

These outcomes do not fit neatly with previous research, however they do find resonance in some aspects. In Abhi's and Raabia's case, the parents were observed to make consistent effort to build a relationship with the teacher, while in Lappi's case, her siblings consistently made contact with her teacher. In each family the outcomes for the participating child improved over the same period. As will be highlighted in the next section, by the end of the observational period, each child had made significant progress in building their school learner identity, negotiating the activation of their home literate practices as valued capital in the classroom. However the same does not occur with their linguistic capital.

Research findings: This study clearly identifies the strong commitment and interest of each family in the education of their children during the period of transition to school. It also highlights the care and commitment of the three teachers to their class members. However relationship building between home and school was driven by the families of the child-participants.

Term End: identity negotiated, capital activated?

At the end of Term One, all three of the child-participants were noted, by their teachers, as having social capital valuable in the makeup of the class. Also, two of the three students achieved scholastic success 'against the odds' (Sammons *et al*, 2008). That is, despite their poor initial assessments during Orientation and the Best Start assessment, and despite their 'minority' status (Doucet & Tudge, 2007), these children achieved results in their end of term assessments that exceeded their teachers' expectations both socially and scholastically. Abhi and Raabia were deemed to be at the top of the class by the time of the second teacher interview. Cairney (2002) noted that 'too much attention has been given to language minority students who are unsuccessful at school' (164) and so a closer investigation of the transition of these successful child-participants adds greater understanding of transition in general and the success of emergent bilingual students more particularly.

As noted in the previous section, the participating families (parents and siblings) built relationships with the girls' teachers through consistent efforts in approaching

the teachers; asking questions; showing their interest in and valuing of education; and visiting the classroom. Similarly, the three girls, confident in their home contexts, approached school eagerly. Each girl demonstrated her willingness to take up school-valued activity through consistent hard work. This was shown as Abhi became the first child in the class to read the day's class sentences. Raabia's success in the Term 1 dictation led to Mrs Cooper's comments regarding the child's consistent efforts with completing set homework. Finally, Lane gained a great deal of positive feedback for repeatedly applying herself to class work despite classroom distractions. As a result, by the end of Term 1, all three girls were often called on to 'do jobs' for their teacher and were consistently given positive feedback; Lane was chosen to be a buddy to a new student in the class; by term end Abhi was consistently surrounded by friends wanting to sit next to her and was stated as having been 'central to the socialisation of the whole class' (TI – 15 August 2011); and Raabia, was praised as a child who shared her possessions selflessly. The three girls' determination to establish their identities, in the school context, as eager learners and socially competent aligned with the teachers' own efforts at inclusion within each classroom.

While the teachers were not observed to pursue relational contact with the families, during the classroom observations they appeared willing to notice and encourage each girl's attempts to negotiate and establish aspects of their home identities as learners and social actors in the classroom. Over time and with effort, the girls were able to have their home literate practices and social capital recognised in the classroom.

However, none of the three children were able to establish any recognition of the linguistic capital they brought to school with them, even though they were all noted as 'being ESL', the only references made to their linguistic capital was in terms of deficit. As Parke *et al* (2002) argued teachers of bilingual children in monolingual learning environments are at risk of not recognising the language (or literacies) competence in languages other than English that these children bring into the classroom.

Finally, when discussing the child-participants' successes in negotiating and activating their capital in the classroom during Term 1, each of the teachers highlighted that despite early successes, they were concerned that this would not continue as the class work became more interpretive. Ms Chapman stated 'Abhi's one of the higher achieving kids... (but) it's going to become more difficult for her when tasks become more involved' (TI – 15 August 2011). This 'but' highlighted the ongoing language needs of these bilingual children. With no specialist language assistance available to any of the three girls, this concern was one that the teachers themselves would have to meet, despite their stated lack of training. Gibbons (2003) argued that 'it may be as much as five years before children who enter school without English develop English skills which are comparable to those of their peers' (3). This coincidence of recognised training deficit and understanding of likely future outcomes, while not part of the child and family led story, places a shadow on the initial phase of Kindergarten outcomes.

Research findings and recommendation: While each child participant was able to negotiate their home literate practices in English and other social capital, none of them had their other language competencies noticed in the school context other than to be labelled as 'being ESL', that is in terms of deficit. With around 30% of Australian school children having linguistic capital in more than one language, this view of language competence must be reassessed by teachers and in terms of policy. Recognition of home capital in the school context has been found to lead to long term advantages beginning with a smooth transition to school.

Implications for policy and practice related to teacher education

In addressing the two research questions implications for further research have arisen for policy and practice and methodologically. This section outlines the implications for policy and practice with regard to labelling students and understanding the changing face of Australian education. The next section will address methodological implications.

Deficit labels: Preservice teacher preparation and teacher professional development must reflect current needs in and across the student body. Wherever deficit labels are used, those labelled must renegotiate their identities in that context in order to overcome the force of the label. For the children in this study, labelled as 'ESL kids', they were labelled by the thing they could not do – they could not speak English as many of their fellow classmates. Rarely do we label people by what they cannot do, rather by what they can do – 'he is a fast runner', 'she is funny'. In this instance, it is incumbent upon teachers to forgo labelling these children in deficit terms, rather picking up on their ability to speak two languages, albeit in an emergent manner. As argued in this thesis, emergent bilingual children have much to offer in the school context and recognisable capital to unpack in the classroom. Therefore teacher knowledge of these language attributes is vital and further research to explore teacher knowledge of home practice and language would enhance school outcomes and teacher education.

A majority issue: In Chapter 2, it was shown that, in Australia, the education of bilingual students has previously been regarded as a minority issue to be addressed by specialist teachers. Hammond (2009) contended that this is a mainstream issue and statistics from the NSW Department of Education and Communities (2013) uphold Hammond's argument. With some 30% of students in NSW (DEC, 2013) coming from households with more than one language being spoken, the 'mainstream' is shifting.

There is, as there always has been, an obligation for teachers to provide all students with academic challenge. This must now take into account the students' multiple linguistic competences with appropriate levels of support made available. The current study has shown that the participating teachers had low levels of knowledge of their emergent bilingual students' linguistic, social and academic competences upon entry to school. These results mirror research conducted in other English-first countries (Drury, 2007; Kenner *et al*, 2008; Parke *et al*, 2002).

As stated in the previous section, teacher training must reflect the changing composition of the student body. Further research is necessary to investigate how

teacher education is changing to reflect the altering face of the classroom and to investigate pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the students they will be teaching. Policy must also acknowledge the changing face of the Australian student body.

Methodological implications for further research

When introducing this project, in Chapter 1, the stated twin aims of the study were:

- to clear a space for the voices of emergent bilingual children and their families in their homes and during the children's transition to the first compulsory year of schooling
- to explore the themes occurring across and within the revealed stories of transition to understand the significance of these for educators and educational policy makers.

These aims were designed to open up the little known home context of emergent bilingual children; using the voices of the child-participants and their families to tell their own stories of home activity and transition. The significance of this period in any child's life for predicting educational outcomes has been well documented; as has the importance of recognising and valuing the capital that each child brings to the classroom.

This study has also had significant implications for the field of qualitative research. The final section of this thesis will outline points at which this project has had methodological impact.

The significance of clearing a space

The issue of whose voice is heard in research and where the power lies during the collection of data became significant during this project. As outlined in Chapter 4, this study has been used as a space cleared for the voices of the participants to speak their experience. Where, previously, people have been grouped; labelled as

‘minority’ or ‘silent’; or have had others speak for them; this study acknowledged that every person has stories to tell and so aimed simply to allow the participants to speak, to share their stories of transition.

This study recognises that the voices of the dominant culture are readily heard. However, as Australia is changing with globalisation, newer voices also need to be heard and so space must be cleared to hear these voices. Not that these voices are silent but that there is often bias related to which voices are more readily heard. The voices in this study do not completely match or reflect the dominant culture at first glance and if they remain unheard they will not be acknowledged or valued in the contexts that they are present in.

In order to do this there were some significant alterations to the methods of data collection that were deemed necessary to allow this to take place. The interview process had to be altered and the positions of researcher and participant had to be examined. In short the power differential inherent in any research relationship had to be examined.

The activity of the interview and the position of researcher and participant

In understanding this thesis as a space cleared for the primary participants, the children and their families, to speak, the power balance between researcher and participant altered. As researcher I deliberately took up the role of learner as outlined by Cairney and Munsie (1992). By placing myself in a less powerful role I attempted to overturn previously stated researcher positions (as outlined in Tables 4.1 and 4.2) whereby the researcher was the speaker for participants or the researcher acted on the participants’ behalf giving voice to them as a whole. As I took up the role of learner several things occurred that continued to alter the dynamic between researcher and participant:

- As I treated the meetings as venues for me, the researcher, to learn, the meetings with families became conversations.
- Significantly, as I approached the interview as a conversation where I would learn from the participants, they took up positions as experts. This occurred

as I showed respect for answers given and conversations flowed at the will of the participants.

- Respect was the basis for all interactions. All stories, opinions and ideas shared were valued and time was allocated as the participants chose. Meetings were long, up to two hours, and consisted of activities that the participants chose to initiate (as outlined in Chapter 5).
- As researcher in this altered context, I also became a question answerer, as the child-participants (and sometimes the adults) asked questions of me.
- I approached the family conversations with a view to spending time with each family member present. This involved a technique I developed of 'sliding between'. During the period I spent in each home I deliberately moved from conversation with the child to that with the adult/s present and into conversations with groups of participants. Sometimes this was physically evident as I moved from the floor to a seat and back again in order to take up the conversation with different members of the family. As the child-participant played with a special toy or puzzle I joined them; then if they left the room to retrieve some other toy or book to share, I moved back to sit with the parent and continue to talk. The messiness of the lived experience was evident in this adapted conversation technique. 'Sliding between' allowed for me to continue to be myself – not deliberately taking on another role as Mandell (1988) did in her 'least adult' role. It facilitated deep interaction and acknowledged the flexibility of activity in a family context.

These alterations to the collection of data contribute to the field of qualitative research by questioning current research practice and highlighting the importance of respect in the research relationship.

Visual artefacts

Symbolic Interactionism acknowledges the symbols of interaction. In this study, these symbols included the collection of artefacts as outlined in Chapter 4 and demonstrated in Chapter 5 and Appendix H. The artefacts that were revealed

opened up the social contexts of the participants they represent. The example of the photos taken by the children in their home contexts, point to essential dimensions of their lived experiences (Rowse, 2011), highlighting their activity prior-to-school. Pahl and Rowse (2010) state artefacts open up contexts to meaning making for meaning makers.

In the family conversations, the use of visual artefacts, symbols of lived experience, opened up the children's and families' transition experiences to deeper, richer observation. This addition to the traditional interview, seen in this study as family conversations, adds depth and validity to the statements made and the stories told.

Conclusion

The calls for further research, highlighted in the literature review and taken up in this study, culminated in raising two questions for investigation: what are the lived experiences of emergent bilingual children in the home?; and how was the capital they brought to school negotiated in the classroom? Despite studies which have highlighted links between the research outcomes for low SES and CALD background students, the current study found numerous similarities between Doucet and Tudge's (2007) 'white, middle class' and the children and their families who participated here. The children in this study displayed many of the home practices valued in mainstream schooling. The findings also highlighted that despite the care and inclusivity exhibited by the experienced and professional teachers, they had little knowledge of the home practices of the emergent bilingual children in their class and little knowledge of the children's families.

The families in this study explicitly prepared their children for school, discussing the upcoming entry to school, assisting and teaching their children literacy and language competences; the children actively participated in home-based activities which promoted the acquisition of various school-related skills. The observed and discussed home activity was conducted in two languages and each language was accorded respect and prominence in the home context. As the stories of transition moved to the school context they altered to highlight the children's and families'

activity undertaken during the initial phase of Kindergarten. In school the children and their families were observed to be agentic in negotiating their social and learner identities, however in the new context home language was rarely used and did not appear to be acknowledged by any of the teachers.

The current study opens a small but significant window onto these areas for consideration by stakeholders through the small stories of the participants (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). In exploring and understanding three family narratives of transition, this study highlights the movement and change in the lives of the young emergent bilingual children in a monolingual educational setting, noting the children's and family's efforts to activate their social, cultural and literate capital in the school setting (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The aim of this study is to have its outcomes inform and challenge teacher beliefs and practices, inform policy and potentially, inspire further investigation, particularly in the Australian context.

In sharing the small stories of these three children and their families, a deeper understanding of the transition experience has emerged, one that is chiefly informed by emergent bilingual child's reality rather than teachers' perspectives. As noted by Peters (2010) in the opening remark, the stories of emergent bilingual children and their families during this significant period of transition to school have not often been recorded. The literature reviewed revealed that the voices of this group of children and their families have largely remained silent, denied a space to tell of their activity and their experience. In answering Peters' (2010) call for research, this project has indicated some of the richness of the lived experiences of these children, which can be used to inform current teacher practice and policy.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Family conversation schedules

Open discussion with families and children

These unstructured conversations took place three times at the beginning of the research (November 2010/January 2011) and then one further discussion as the final part of the data collection (after the end of Term 1, 2011).

The first three meetings had a broad focus on hearing the children's and family's stories about their school preparation, what they thought would be important in their preparation for school with a focus on how they and the families have encouraged communication skill development (or literacy skills). There were no set questions, rather the children and their parent/s set the agenda with a broad focus on communication/literacy and transition to school.

Appendix B

Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms

Letter of invitation to Community Language Schools

University of Wollongong



Faculty of Education

Dear Community Language Teachers,

A few weeks ago I had the privilege of meeting a number of you as you participated in the Certificate of Language Teaching run by Dr Lisa Kervin, held at the University of Wollongong. It was exciting to see the wonderful classroom resources you had created and to hear about your schools (and I loved the wonderful food I tried on the final day!).

I am currently doing research in the area of transition to school, especially looking at how children and their families communicate. The focus of my study is to look at the special needs of children who speak a language other than English at home as they come to school for the first time. My research supervisors are Dr Lisa Kervin and Dr Sarah O'Shea.

Why I am doing this research?

With around 21% of Australian school children coming from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, there are calls for more research to be done to understand children's transition to school. This project will focus on children's experience of literacy as they move from home to Kindergarten.

Why is this important?

Research has shown that a good beginning to school has ongoing benefits for the child's progress at school. However, there has been little research looking at what beginning school is like for children, in their own words.

Why am I writing to ask you for help?

I am looking for 5 young children and their families to participate in my research project. The children would be going to begin school in 2011. I write to seek your assistance in finding suitable families with a child of this age. If you know of a family with a child going into school next year could you pass on the attached information to them. If they are

willing to take part in the project they simply need to sign the Consent Form and return it to me. You or the family can ring me if there are questions.

What involvement would mean for the family?

In this project I would like to meet with the family four times for one to two hours each time. Three times before their child begins school and once at the end of Term 1 of school in 2011. My main aim will be to talk to the child and their parents about how they are preparing for school, about how they spend time together and I would like to watch the child at play. During Term 1 I will also be going to their Kindergarten classroom to see how they settle in to school and how the teacher includes these children and their rich cultural heritage.

How will the family's and child's rights be observed?

Ethical aspects of this project have been approved by the University of Wollongong and the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), and as such will adhere to strict ethical guidelines. For example, schools, teachers, children and their families will not be identified in any reports or publications, participants' interests are respected and raw data will be kept strictly confidential. If you have any concerns regarding the conducting of this research please contact the Complaints Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on 02 4221 4457.

What will happen to the findings of this project?

The data collected in this project will be used in my PhD thesis and other related publications.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you wish to obtain further information about the project. Your assistance would be greatly appreciated,

Kathryn Harden-Thew

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Faculty of Education

The lived experience of children's literacy transitions from prior-to-school settings to Kindergarten for children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

PRINCIPAL INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Principal,

I am currently carrying out PhD research in the area of transition to school with a special focus on family literacy practices of children of culturally and linguistically (CALD) background and how these practices are taken up in the Kindergarten classroom. I am working with my supervisors, Dr Lisa Kervin and Dr Sarah O'Shea.

Why I am doing this research?

With around 21% of Australian school children coming from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, there are calls for further research to be carried out in the area of transition to school for CALD background children. This project will focus on children's experience of literacy as they make the transition into Kindergarten.

How you can be involved?

I have enlisted 5 young children and their families as participants and I have been meeting with them in order to learn about their family literacy practices. One of these children,, has enrolled in your school and will take up that enrolment in 2011. I would like to invite the Kindergarten teacher who will have this child in their class to take part in this project. I write to seek your approval and assistance in conducting this portion of my research.

What teacher involvement would mean?

In the project I wish to observe CALD background children as they make the transition to school, particularly focusing on their literacy knowledge and skills. Approval is sought to visit your school on six occasions during Term 1, 2011. I would like to observe during his/her in-class literacy session on six separate days (three at the beginning of the term, one mid-term and two further sessions at the end of term). I am particularly interested in how uses the skills that he/she had prior to entering school in the class and how he/she acts and interacts during these sessions. I would also like to interview the child's teacher twice (no more than 30 minutes for each interview) to ask the teacher about their approach to literacy teaching in the Kindergarten classroom and to hear about how the teacher assesses this child is settling in to school.

If you are happy for the Kindergarten teacher concerned to take part in this research please direct the participant information sheet and consent form (attached) to the teacher.

How will the teacher's and the school's rights be observed?

Ethical aspects of this project have been approved by the University of Wollongong and the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), and as such will adhere to strict ethical guidelines. For example, schools, teachers, students and their families will not be identified in any reports or publications, participants' interests are respected and raw data will be kept strictly confidential. If you have any concerns regarding the conducting of this research please contact the Complaints Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on 02 4221 4457.

What will happen to the findings of this project?

The data collected in this project will be used in my PhD thesis and other related publications. Findings, particularly those related to your school, may be of interest to you and your staff. If you would like to hear the outcomes of my research I would be very happy to share them with you and your staff, either in written form or during a staff presentation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you wish to obtain further information about the project.

Your assistance would be greatly appreciated,

Kathryn Harden-Thew

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Faculty of Education

TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

Research Project: The lived experience of children's literacy transitions from prior-to-school settings to Kindergarten for children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Researcher: Kathryn Harden-Thew

I am a PhD student studying in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong. My Research Supervisors are Dr Lisa Kervin and Dr Sarah O'Shea.

Why am I doing this research?

In this research, I wish to explore the transition of young culturally and linguistically (CALD) background children to Kindergarten with a particular focus on the literacy skills they bring to school and how they build on those skills and take up new elements. The aim of the research is to hear the voices of CALD background children making the transition to school. The benefit of such a study lies in the restorying of children's experiences for a greater audience, allowing teachers, researchers, policy makers and other key stakeholders insights into the lived experiences of children learning English and becoming literate within the Australian education system.

What will it involve?

I have recruited 5 children of CALD background who will be entering Kindergarten in 2011. One of these children,, will be joining your Kindergarten class in the new year. Prior to commencing school I will be meeting with this child and his/her family to observe their family literacy practices. I would like to continue this study by being able to come in to your classroom six times during Term 1 to observe this child as they participate in literacy sessions. Field notes will be taken during the observation sessions. I would also ask you to participate in two short interviews (no more than 30 minute duration). I am hoping to gain an understanding of the your aims during literacy sessions and your ideas for including children of CALD background in your classroom, also to understand how you incorporate literacy policy into your programming. Interviews will be audio recorded and will be held at your convenience.

Field notes and recorded interviews will be collected and stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure office in the University of Wollongong. Access will be available only to the researcher, Kathryn Harden-Thew (and her two supervisors) for a period of five years, after which time the information will be destroyed. Audio recordings will be transcribed for analysis.

What will the visits entail?

The first interview will take place the week before Kindergarten begins when you are available. Then I would like to come to your classroom six times in Term 1 to observe as he/she participates in your class literacy session.

This would take place in Weeks 1, 2, 3, 6 and the last two weeks of term. The second teacher interview would take place after the observations have finished. All of these meetings will be held at times suitable to you and your class.

How will the your rights be respected?

The research is approved by the University of Wollongong and the NSW Department

of Education and Training (DET), and as such will adhere to strict ethical guidelines. For example, schools, teachers and students will not be identified in any reports or publications, participants' interests are respected and raw data will be kept strictly confidential.

What you should know:

- Your voluntary participation in the study will be treated confidentially. In both the analysis and reporting of data, you and your school will not be identified.
- As noted on the Consent Form, you are free to withdraw consent or withdraw your data at any time. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing consent will not affect your relationship with either University of Wollongong or your school.
- Concerns with the conducting of the research can be addressed to the Complaints Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on 02 4221 4457.

Thank you for your support in assisting with this study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if, at any time, you have questions about the research.

Kathryn Harden-Thew

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TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Research Project: The lived experience of children's literacy transitions from prior-to-school settings to Kindergarten for children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Researcher: Kathryn Harden-Thew

Teacher Consent:

I have been provided with information about this project and my involvement, and have had opportunity to discuss the project with the researcher, Kathryn Harden-Thew. I understand the researcher is conducting this study as part of her PhD project undertaken at the University of Wollongong.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong or my standing with my school.

I understand that if I have any enquiries about the research I can contact Kathryn Harden-Thew (02 4221 3603) or if I have any complaints regarding the manner in which the research has been conducted I can contact the Complaints Officer, Human Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on 02 4221 4457.

I understand that by signing below I am indicating my consent to participate in the research project conducted by Kathryn Harden-Thew as it has been described to me. In participating I understand that:

- Kathryn Harden-Thew will come into my Kindergarten classroom for a total of six visits to observe, a student in my class during six literacy sessions at times that are convenient to me and the smooth running of my class.
- I will be interviewed twice and that questions asked during the semi-structured interviews will be based on my personal understanding of school and state policies related to literacy instruction as well as my observations of the above mentioned student.
- audio recordings will be made as a part of the study. These recordings will take place during interviews only. Recordings will be transcribed for analysis.
- the data collected from observations in my classroom will be used to assist the researcher in the research project regarding the transition of CALD background children from home to school, with particular focus on their literacy practices.

Name:

Signature:

Date:



FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

Research Project: The lived experience of children's literacy transitions from prior-to-school settings to Kindergarten for children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Researcher: Kathryn Harden-Thew

Thank you for expressing an interest in this exciting research being conducted at the University of Wollongong. Full details about the project, its purpose, the researchers involved and what is required of you and your child, should you agree to be involved, are provided in this information sheet.

Why am I doing this research?

Recently there have been concerns about how children, who speak a language other than English at home, settle in to school. I am interested in the ways that families and children prepare for school and how schools help children to settle in. My special focus is on communication skills. Every child brings a rich set of social skills to school and I am interested to see how these skills are encouraged and built on during Kindergarten.

Why is this important?

Research has shown that a good beginning to school has ongoing benefits for the child's progress at school. However, there has been little research looking at what beginning school is like for children, in their own words.

What will it involve?

Being part of this project would involve both you and your child consenting to three visits to your home by the researcher (Kathryn Harden-Thew) over a three week period (before school starts in 2011). I would like to spend time with you and your child, asking you both about the things you think are important in preparing for school. My special focus will be what communication skills your family values. I would also like to observe your child at play during those visits. Each visit would last one to two hours.

Following these three home visits I will attend your child's school to observe 6 lessons in their Kindergarten classroom (I will approach your child's school once you and your child give your consent to participate in this study). After the six school visits I will return for one further visit to your home (at the end of Term 1) to ask your child about his/her experience of going to school and to share the data that have been collected.

Participation in the study.

Being part of this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. Withdrawal will not jeopardise your current or future relationship with the University of Wollongong or your child's school. Any information already given at the time of withdrawal may be used or not, at your discretion. To withdraw simply contact Kathryn Harden-Thew on 02 4221 3603.

What will happen to the information you provide?

During visits to your home I will take notes as I watch your child at play and I will record our discussions. The recordings made will be transcribed so that I can better remember and understand the conversations we have. The data will then be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office in the University of Wollongong. Access will be available only to me (and my two supervisors) for a period of five years, after that time

the information will be destroyed. The information I collected will form part of my Doctor of Philosophy degree and the information may be used in publications, presentations and theses. All information I collect will be unable to be traced back to you or your family.

What you should know:

- Your participation in the study will be treated confidentially. In both the analysis and reporting of data, you and your school will not be individually identified.
- You are free to withhold consent or withdraw consent to participate at any time without penalty (as noted above), simply contact Kathryn Harden-Thew on 4221 3603. If you choose to withdraw, all data provided by you will be destroyed.
- Concerns with the conducting of the research can be addressed to the Complaints Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on 02 4221 4457.

If you agree to participate in the study, please fill out the consent form and return it to me. Your child's verbal consent will be asked for before our first meeting. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions. I will contact you.

Your co-operation in this project will be greatly appreciated.

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Dr Sarah O'Shea
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Faculty of Education

PARENT CONSENT FORM

Research Project: The lived experience of children's literacy transitions from prior-to-school settings to Kindergarten for children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Researcher: Kathryn Harden-Thew

Parent Consent:

I have been given information about this study. I have had the opportunity to discuss the research with Kathryn Harden-Thew who is conducting the study at the University of Wollongong.

I understand that, if I consent to participating I will be asked to:

- allow Kathryn Harden-Thew to observe my child in our home environment three times in a three week period.
- discuss with Kathryn Harden-Thew how our family has prepared our child for school and the communication practices that we value (during the above mentioned home visits).
- allow Kathryn Harden-Thew to ask my child to talk about his/her interests and play.
- allow Kathryn Harden-Thew to record the conversations we have with her in our home and that these recordings will later be transcribed by Kathryn for use in her research.
- allow Kathryn Harden-Thew to further observe my child when he/she is at school during 6 observation sessions in the classroom during Term 1, 2011
- allow Kathryn Harden-Thew to visit our home once after the completion of the school observations to discuss my child's experiences of school.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. Withdrawal from the study will not affect my relationship with the University of Wollongong or with my child's school.

If I have enquiries about the research, I can contact Kathryn Harden-Thew on (02) 4221 3603, or if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on (02) 4221 4457.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to participate in this research project, as it has been described to me in the information sheet and discussion with Kathryn Harden-Thew. I understand that the data collected from me and my child through observations and discussion may be used in an academic thesis, journal publications and conference presentations, and I consent to it being used in that manner. I understand that the information collected by Kathryn will not be traced back to myself, my family or any other person or place.

Consent

I, (Parent's/Guardian's Name), agree
for my child (Child's Name)..... and I to take part
in this study.

Address:

Phone: Child's DOB:

Parent's/Guardian's Signature:

Date:.....

CHILD INFORMATION SHEET

Rough script for verbal consent:

..... (child's name), thank you for having me in your home today. I've come to ask you for some help.

I'm doing some work to find out about how kids get ready to go to school. I'd like to find 5 kids who can tell me about what they like doing at home with their families; and what they think school will be like.

I was wondering if you would be one of the special kids who helps me?

I've asked your family if they'd help too and they said that would be ok as long as you'd like to do it too.

If you say yes – I'll come over for a chat three more times after today and I'll come to see you at school when you start Kindi next year.

Helping me out is your choice and you can change your mind anytime. That's just fine.

Each time I come we can have a chat with your parents and I'll stay for a little while to see you have a play too.

If you'd like to be one of these kids – you can tell me now...

Note: Every child is different and has different abilities and facility with language, so this rough draft is simply a guide to the general areas to be covered as I talk to each child. This information will be conveyed at each meeting to reassure the child participants of their rights in each meeting.

Appendix C

Teacher interview schedules

Interview One – Before classroom observations

1. Tell me about your teaching experience and training
2. What is the cultural mix of the school's student population?
3. Tell me about your class – what will it be like this year? Tell me about what you know of the cultural/linguistic diversity you are expecting in your class?
4. Can you tell me your definition of literacy? Where does this come from – reading, school policy, the syllabus? Tell me about how you use your definition (and these documents) to inform your class program.
5. Tell me about your work with CALD background children up till this year. Are there school documents that you have used to inform your programming for these children? What training, if any, have you had to help you in this area? Tell me about the school resources you use regularly to help you?
6. Have you had many children of CALD background in your classes before? Where have they come from? Tell me about how you include these children in your class?

Interview Two – After Classroom Observations finished

1. Tell me about how you think (child participant's name) is settling in to class and school. Socially? Academically? Other?
2. Tell me about the literacy skills you have observed that he/she has brought to class from home.
3. How has he/she developed these skills in the classroom?
4. How have you worked to develop these skills?
5. What have you done to develop other needed skills?
6. Tell me about the things that you think are puzzling or concerning about with this child's literacy development so far.
7. Tell me about any patterns you have observed about this child's activity in the class or their development.
8. Tell me about your relationship with this child and his/her family.
9. How would you describe this child's transition to school?

Appendix D

Themes - Free Nodes, NVivo

























Free Nodes

Name	Sources	Reference	Created On
Assessment	4	9	4/04/2012 12:10 PM
Awards at school	1	1	2/04/2012 2:11 PM
Best Practice	2	4	3/04/2012 10:30 AM
BestStart	1	3	4/04/2012 11:22 AM
Checking comprehension	11	17	15/12/2011 12:39 P
Child acceptance in-class	3	5	5/04/2012 12:15 PM
Child as active participant - school	5	8	5/04/2012 1:51 PM
Child as interpreter	1	1	1/04/2012 12:56 PM
Child as teacher	2	4	2/04/2012 12:44 PM
Child behaviour - in class	3	7	4/04/2012 11:08 AM
Child description	2	4	19/02/2012 8:17 AM
Child discusses life	3	3	15/12/2011 2:23 PM
Child Friendships	10	16	19/02/2012 7:44 AM
Child Participant speaks	8	17	19/02/2012 7:52 AM
child's explanation of family relationships	2	2	19/02/2012 11:32 A
child's favourite activities	5	16	19/02/2012 11:27 A
Child's interest in self - photoss	1	1	20/02/2012 2:49 PM
Child's perception of readiness	4	5	15/12/2011 2:10 PM
Class make-up	3	4	19/12/2011 3:06 PM
Classroom diagram	1	2	5/04/2012 1:31 PM
Classroom set up	1	2	5/04/2012 12:13 PM
Community Language School	2	3	19/02/2012 10:11 A
Cost of living	1	1	19/02/2012 8:14 AM
Cost of nonresidency	2	3	15/12/2011 10:39 A
Crossing cultural boundaries	8	15	19/12/2011 12:36 P
Crossing language barriers	7	24	19/12/2011 3:23 PM
Downward pressure - from NAPLAN	2	8	3/04/2012 11:23 AM
Educational expectations	7	10	12/12/2011 12:47 P
ESL support	9	27	15/12/2011 2:05 PM
Family accommodation	2	3	19/02/2012 8:16 AM
Family Activity	5	19	19/02/2012 7:53 AM
Family literate practices	17	59	15/12/2011 1:38 PM
Family moves	5	8	14/12/2011 2:25 PM
Family Reaction to the Study	1	1	1/04/2012 10:55 AM
Family relationship with school, teacher	7	13	15/12/2011 12:50 P
Family story	9	22	13/12/2011 10:58 A
Finding participants	1	1	19/02/2012 8:15 AM
First Day at School	2	2	2/04/2012 1:23 PM
Funny	3	3	15/12/2011 12:29 P
Gaining consent	3	3	19/02/2012 8:18 AM
Games at preschool	1	1	19/02/2012 7:52 AM
Gender - interest in	5	7	15/12/2011 1:36 PM
Home activity	6	13	19/02/2012 8:00 AM
Home and other languages	8	24	13/12/2011 10:56 A
Homework	3	4	2/04/2012 1:46 PM

Free Nodes

Name	Sources	Reference	Created On
Identity - cultural or language	4	18	1/04/2012 11:01 AM
In-class Rewards	1	1	5/04/2012 12:14 PM
interaction with the interviewer - games	6	13	19/02/2012 8:03 AM
intertextuality	1	2	2/04/2012 10:10 AM
interview participants	2	4	19/02/2012 11:55 A
Interviewer desperation	1	2	20/02/2012 2:40 PM
Interviewer reflections	12	24	15/12/2011 10:40 A
Interviewer scaffolding	5	9	13/12/2011 10:28 A
Isolation	2	2	1/04/2012 1:17 PM
Keeping L2 going	2	4	2/04/2012 2:14 PM
Language Development	9	29	1/04/2012 10:57 AM
learning L1 - L2	8	29	19/02/2012 7:41 AM
Literacy - block	8	22	19/12/2011 3:38 PM
Literacy - definition	2	3	19/12/2011 3:35 PM
Literacy in final interview	2	20	15/12/2011 11:15 A
Literacy prior to school	10	44	14/12/2011 11:14 A
Literate practices with other siblings	1	1	19/02/2012 7:36 AM
looking forward to school	5	11	19/02/2012 7:46 AM
Losing a participant	1	2	19/12/2011 12:38 P
Moving from description to discussion	3	5	13/12/2011 2:00 PM
National Curriculum	1	2	3/04/2012 11:46 AM
Orientation	7	14	14/12/2011 2:50 PM
Other capital prior to school	6	17	15/12/2011 1:29 PM
Parent Fears - regarding school	3	3	2/04/2012 10:51 AM
Parent literacy	6	10	14/12/2011 1:32 PM
Parent scaffolding	12	48	12/12/2011 12:44 P
parental education	7	12	19/02/2012 7:24 AM
Parental reflections	10	18	12/12/2011 12:50 P
Parental reflections on employment	2	3	19/02/2012 9:43 AM
parenting	1	1	19/02/2012 10:15 A
Participating in a larger study	2	2	15/12/2011 11:14 A
Participation in a study	1	1	8/04/2012 10:44 AM
Pedagogy	2	4	2/04/2012 1:33 PM
Photo description	2	9	20/02/2012 2:29 PM
Policy documents used by teacher	2	4	19/12/2011 3:47 PM
Power - query	3	4	15/12/2011 10:44 A
practicing English	3	5	19/02/2012 9:39 AM
preparing for school	6	10	19/02/2012 9:33 AM
Preschool	8	18	15/12/2011 2:50 PM
Preschool attendance	4	4	19/12/2011 3:44 PM
Preschool graduation	1	1	19/02/2012 8:11 AM
Reading	9	23	15/12/2011 2:43 PM
Reading Recovery	1	1	3/04/2012 11:54 AM
Reading Strategies	4	6	2/04/2012 12:41 PM
Relationship building with family	1	2	2/04/2012 11:31 AM

Free Nodes

	Name		Sources	Reference	Created On
	Relationship with Interviewer		11	22	15/12/2011 2:29 PM
	Relationships at school		9	27	15/12/2011 12:14 P
	Relationships in the family		11	26	15/12/2011 1:35 PM
	Relationships outside the family		11	20	15/12/2011 1:41 PM
	Religious experience		6	9	15/12/2011 10:45 A
	Researcher's role in class		1	1	5/04/2012 12:17 PM
	School Activity		3	6	15/12/2011 11:15 A
	school expectations - hopes		6	12	19/02/2012 8:12 AM
	Sibling description		2	2	19/02/2012 8:17 AM
	sibling scaffolding		4	8	19/02/2012 9:24 AM
	silence and speaking		3	5	19/02/2012 7:48 AM
	Size-Cultural make-up of school		3	8	19/12/2011 3:05 PM
	Speaking english - showing comprehensio		4	5	19/02/2012 9:23 AM
	Spelling		2	2	4/04/2012 12:11 PM
	Teacher Qualifications and Experience		2	14	19/12/2011 2:59 PM
	Teacher Reflections		6	28	2/04/2012 12:48 PM
	teacher resources		4	10	20/12/2011 12:25 P
	Teacher scaffolding		4	9	8/04/2012 12:00 PM
	Technology - interest in		6	8	15/12/2011 1:37 PM
	Transition		9	42	15/12/2011 12:47 P
	Triple L		8	23	3/04/2012 10:42 AM
	Writing		5	6	2/04/2012 2:11 PM

Appendix E

University ethics approval

University of Wollongong



INITIAL APPLICATION APPROVAL

In reply please quote: HE10/313
Further Enquiries Phone: 4221 4457

COPY

27 October 2010

Ms Kathryn Harden-Thew
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
NSW 2522

Dear Ms Harden-Thew,

Thank you for your response dated 5 October 2010 to the HREC review of the application detailed below. I am pleased to advise that the application has been approved and forwarded to the Department of Education and Training for approval of your SERAP application.

Ethics Number: HE10/313

SERAP No: 2009211

Project Title: The lived experience of children's literacy transitions from prior-to-school settings to Kindergarten for children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Researchers: Ms Kathryn Harden-Thew, Dr Lisa Kervin, Dr Sarah O'Shea

Approval Date: 7 October 2010

Expiry Date: 6 October 2011

The University of Wollongong/SESIAHS Humanities, Social Science and Behavioural HREC is constituted and functions in accordance with the NHMRC *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. The HREC has reviewed the research proposal for compliance with the *National Statement* and approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with this document. As evidence of continuing compliance, the Human Research Ethics Committee requires that researchers immediately report:

- proposed changes to the protocol including changes to investigators involved
- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

You are also required to complete monitoring reports annually and at the end of your project. These reports are sent out approximately 6 weeks prior to the date your ethics approval expires. The reports must be completed, signed by the appropriate Head of School, and returned to the Research Services Office prior to the expiry date.

Yours sincerely

A/Professor Steven Roodenrys
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Cc: Dr. Lisa Kervin, Faculty of Education

Research Services Office University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia
Telephone: +61 2 4221 3386 Facsimile: +61 2 4221 4338
research_services@uow.edu.au www.uow.edu.au/research
CRICOS Provider No: 00102E

Appendix F

Department of Education and Training

SERAP approval



Ms Kathryn Harden-Thew
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
Northfields Avenue
WOLLONGONG NSW 2522

SERAP 2009211

Dear Ms Harden Thew

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *The lived experience of children's literacy transitions from prior-to-school settings to Kindergarten for children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.**

This approval will remain valid until 28 September 2011.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Name	Approval expires
Kathryn Harden-Thew	28/09/2011.

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please email your report to: serap@det.nsw.edu.au.

You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Robert Stevens
Manager, Schooling Research
21 November 2010

Student Engagement and Program Evaluation
NSW Department of Education and Communities
Level 3, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300
Telephone: 02 9244 5003 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au

Appendix G

University ethics approval amendment



AMENDMENT APPROVAL

In reply please quote: HE10/313

28 November 2012

Ms Kathryn Harden-Thew
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong NSW 2522

Dear Ms Harden-Thew

I am pleased to advise that the amendment to the following Human Research Ethics application has been approved.

Ethics Number:	HE10/313
SERAP No:	2009211
Name of Researchers:	Ms Kathryn Harden-Thew, Dr Lisa Kervin, Dr Sarah O'Shea
Project Title:	The lived experience of children's literacy transitions from prior-to-school settings to Kindergarten for children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
Amendment:	Use of photos taken of children participating in activities, eg reading, during the research project to be used in thesis as artefacts. (It is noted that verbal permission was previously given by parents of participants for use of these photos in the research)
Amendment Approval Date:	15 November 2012
Expiry Date:	6 October 2013

Please send a written response clearly addressing each point above to the Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, University of Wollongong, along with the revised document/s showing changes by either highlighting or using Track Changes. It is not necessary to submit a revised application form.

Please remember that in addition to reporting proposed changes to your research protocol the HREC requires that researchers immediately report:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

The University of Wollongong/Illawarra and Shoalhaven Local Health District Social Sciences HREC is constituted and functions in accordance with the NHMRC *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*.

Ethics Unit, Research Services Office
University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia
Telephone (02) 4221 3386 Facsimile (02) 4221 4338
Email: rso-ethics@uow.edu.au Web: www.uow.edu.au



Appendix I

Orientation Program: Fern Wood Public School

Fairy Meadow Public School | Kindergarten 2011 *Appendix I*

Page 1 of 1

Fairy Meadow Public School
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Balgownie Rd Fairy Meadow
Phone 4284 2009

[HOME](#) [OUR SCHOOL](#) [CURRICULUM & ACTIVITIES](#) [LEARNING FOR STUDENTS](#) [LINKS](#) **KINDERGARTEN 2011**

Choose school year: [Preschool](#) [Kindergarten](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)

Kindergarten 2011

KINDERGARTEN 2011

During Term 3 Fairy Meadow will be commencing our Transition to School Program.

If you are interested in visiting our fantastic school please contact the school directly. We would also like to invite you to attend our Parent Information Session and school tour.

Transition to 'Big' School

Tuesday 10th August

7.00pm - 8.00pm

- Parent night in the school hall

(Kindergarten students are not required to attend this event but if alternative child care arrangements cannot be made they are welcome.)

Tuesday 24th August

9.30am - 10.30am

- Tour of our school & welcome morning tea for parents and students with the Principal

Thursday 2nd September

11.45am - 12.45pm

- Children in classroom
- Parents meeting in hall

Thursday 9th September

11.45am - 12.45pm

- Children in classroom
- Parents meeting in hall

Thursday 16th September

11.45am - 1.30pm

- Children in classroom & then invited to stay for picnic lunch
- Parents meeting in hall - Kindergarten teachers will be leading the session

If you have any further enquiries please contact our school on 4284 2009.



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NSW Government

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Appendix J

Classroom Observations

Raabia in Class KC with Mrs Cooper (Fern Wood Public School)

Observation 1 - 9 February 2011

During Roll Call I noted that Raabia was 'hesitant and softly spoken', she sat alone on the mat. Her normally outgoing, friendly behaviour had vanished. Mrs Cooper called on Raabia to answer a number of questions including to give the number of days in the week. The class had recited the day names and had counted them off on their fingers, however when called on to state the number of days in a week Raabia had responded 'four'. Mrs Cooper praised Raabia for answering and then went on to correct the answer. Later in this introductory session the students were asked to put up their hands if they had an 'a' (the letter of the day) in their name. Raabia put up her hand but was not noticed, upon putting her hand down the teacher called on her, saying 'Raabia, you have an 'a' in your name'. Throughout this session Raabia was silent, she appeared withdrawn.

Mrs Cooper carefully outlined the six activities for the morning and then placed the children in groups of three or four. These groups were organised using guidance from the outcomes of the Best Start assessment. Each group began with a different activity and moved, clockwise, around the room, spending ten minutes on each. Even as early as Week 3 (the second week of Kindergarten), the groups were able to undertake the tasks with minimal supervision. After each ten minute block the teacher asked the children to move to the next activity. Children had been instructed not to interrupt the teacher, who sat in what was known as the Engine Room working with one small group at a time. Over the six observed sessions in Term 1 the make-up of the small groups altered, as Mrs Cooper explained to the children in Week 4 – 'We change groups because people change'. This simple explanation appeared to overcome any doubts the children may have had over change in their groups.

Engine Room³ – The group in the Engine Room read with Mrs Cooper and undertook some writing practice. When Raabia’s group (comprised of Raabia, Indira and Sam) came to their third activity they sat at the desk across from the teacher. Raabia seemed distracted and looked around the room. The teacher read the reader⁴ to the three children, showing the pictures and directing the children’s attention to points of interest. Then she handed a copy of the book to each child. She showed the children how to point to the words as they read, assisting Raabia and Sam to do this. By page four Raabia was pointing to the words as they read.

In the next segment of their work together, identifying the letters learnt so far, Raabia checked the child beside her before pointing to the letter that the teacher asked for. This activity was repeated using the class’ sight words. When the teacher asked the children to point to the word ‘I’ Raabia called out ‘I found it!’, however she was not pointing to the correct word. Indira, next to her, showed her the correct word and she pointed to it.

In the final segment in the Engine Room the children practiced writing on mini whiteboards. The teacher guided Raabia’s hand as she attempted to write the letter ‘a’.

Play – A container of plastic animals was set down on the carpeted area for the small groups to take time out during the busy circuit. In this play segment Raabia alternated shared play with play on her own. When playing alone, she talked for the toy animals that she was moving around the floor:

Raabia talks to herself as she plays – her talk is in English, she is speaking for the animals – ‘Oh I’m sorry... Alright, let’s go!... I’m the

³ Used in the Triple L program, the Engine Room is where the teacher works with small groups of 2, 3 or 4 students for 10 minute periods. During this time the teacher models and guides several activities including reading, practicing site words and writing.

⁴ Basal Reader - a short text purposively constructed for reading instruction with emergent readers. These texts have a few high-frequency words used repeatedly. The story line is simple and there is a direct match between text and illustrations. Other print aspects are used to assist the reader: large spaces between words, print is regular and carefully separated from illustrations. School readers are levelled to indicate reader’s ability level.

baby... Let's go!' Raabia 'rides' her horses over to Indira's line of animals – saying – 'Let's find the baby... Are you the baby?' (CO)

Raabia also exhibited some strident behaviour, responding to Indira wanting to share the animals. 'NO! I want!' Raabia took the plastic horse from Indira, moving off to play alone.

Interpretive comment

Mrs Cooper's class, KC, was orderly, books and resources consistently tidy, posters and signs in their places; and the children were calm, each appeared to know what to do and how to do it, including working in small groups with minimal supervision. The children clearly understood class routines, moving between activities without fuss. When the class sat together they were attentive, all activities were clearly explained and during small group work the groups moved around the activities quietly and were obviously engaged in the work they undertook. And all this in the second week of Kindergarten!

However, Raabia appeared quite different from how she had presented during the home visits. In the classroom she was quiet and reserved, occasionally strident, always used English, even with the toys she played with. Her unbridled home-confidence seemed to have disappeared and she consistently sat alone when on the mat. During activities, particularly in the Engine Room, Raabia appeared unsure of herself and regularly looked to her neighbour, Indira, to show her what to do.

Observation 2 - 16 February 2011

During the introductory session the letter being focussed on was again in Raabia's (real) name – 'f'. Again the teacher asked for the children who had this letter in their name, again she did not see Raabia's hand and she said 'I don't think anyone does.' This time Raabia kept her hand up and Mrs Cooper rewarded her persistence, 'Oh Raabia, you do!' The teacher then showed a number of pictures and asked the children to select the ones that began with 'f'. Raabia was selected and she chose and named a picture of an apple. 'Good girl – you named the apple

but it doesn't start with 'f'... /f/ Look at my mouth... /f/... I'll show you one' (the teacher pointed to a picture of fire) – Raabia responded 'fire'. Her voice was firm and she smiled at the teacher.

Reading Corner - After a couple of minutes playing in the Reading Corner, Raabia's attention was taken by a familiar picture, the front cover of a 'Bananas in Pyjamas' book showing a photo of B1 and B2 just as they appear in her Bananas in Pyjamas DVD at home. She lay down on the floor and looked at every page, pointing to the pictures and talking to herself as she did so. She reread the book in this way several times and the teacher, noticing her continued quiet reading commended her – 'I love the way you're reading' she said to Raabia from the Engine Room. On finally satisfying her interest in this book, Raabia selected another book (*Dear Zoo* by Rod Campbell) and read so intently that she didn't notice Mrs Cooper call the children to move onto the next activity.

Engine Room - Similar to the previous week, Mrs Cooper read the selected reader to the small group and then handed them out. Again Raabia was not able to point to and read the text. Mrs Cooper again held Raabia's hand, showing her how to point to the words as the group read. By page four Raabia managed this by herself – 'Good girl, Raabia, you've done it!' (Mrs Cooper – CO).

The group then practiced identifying the letters focussing on in class. Raabia continued to check Indira before pointing at the appropriate letter. Indira received a lot of praise during this session, she was quick to complete tasks and was invariably correct. Raabia continued to show signs of being unsure, so when the teacher asked the three children to write an 'f' Raabia was only able to complete the letter with the teacher guiding her hand. On the third attempt Raabia was successful and Mrs Cooper exclaimed – 'beautiful'.

Writing on Mini-whiteboards - During this writing session the children were asked to practice writing their class letters and the sight words in their individual sight word list. Mrs Cooper noticed Raabia drawing a picture and said 'Raabia, don't just draw a picture... write letters'. After a small interruption Raabia took another

picture she had drawn to show the teacher, who nodded and said – ‘Rub it out now, remember we are practicing our letters... Oh Indira, look at all those beautiful ‘a’s!’ The praise for Indira’s work seemed a catalyst, Raabia returned to her desk and wrote a perfect ‘a’. At the end of this session Mrs Cooper praised Raabia who had written a line of capital ‘I’s – ‘Oh the word ‘I’ - Well done!’

In the middle of this Activity, Adam, the third child in the group, turned to Raabia – ‘I want to do a wee’. Unlike Adam who was uncertain about interrupting Mrs Cooper during the morning activities, Raabia went directly to the teacher, in the Engine Room – ‘Adam says he want to go to toilet,’ she stated. She was clear and confident, more like the girl I’d seen in her home context, caring for others.

At the end of the Literacy Block activities, while other children were still packing up, Raabia sat in the mat area and chatted to the boy next to her. The pair then moved over to the Merit Chart and I heard her say ‘I’ll show you mine!’ The children bent over the chart and compared the stamps they had received.

Interpretive comment

After three weeks of school attendance Raabia was still uncertain about many of the class activities she had to undertake. She continued to be very quiet in class. However, the teacher’s consistent praise appeared to be having an effect. Raabia appeared to be very extrinsically motivated and often altered her behaviour directly after hearing the teacher praise another child or in response to being given praise.

During the Reading Corner session Raabia found a ‘Bananas in Pyjamas’ book which she then read for most of the activity time. This book was familiar to her as it was taken from the same series that the DVD her parents had bought her. While it is not certain that the Askari’s had any knowledge of Australian popular culture for young children this link between home and school appeared to be a way for Raabia to settle into the reading corner activity and engage in a meaningful way.

In this second session of classroom observation, Raabia began to reassert her outgoing, social nature. She helped her friend who needed the toilet and she initiated a conversation about Merit stamps in a moment of free time. She appeared more relaxed in this second observational period.

Observation 3 - 23 February 2011

Displayed on the teacher's small whiteboard next to her chair in the mat area were the letters that the class had already learned. These included – s, m, a, t, i, f, d, r. Mrs Cooper used a pointer and the children called out the letter. First she moved from left to right; then from right to left; finally she pointed randomly to the letters. After this the teacher placed the 'i' and the 't' together and asked 'Who can make the word – 'it'? Sound it out – how many sounds?' The children answer '2'. One child was selected to put the two sounds together to form the word 'it'. The Mrs Cooper asked if anyone can make the word 'sit' – Raabia was selected to complete this word. She chose the letter 's' and placed it in front of 'it' – the children clapped.

Engine Room – Raabia's small group read together with the teacher assisting Raabia to pointing as she read. Mrs Cooper sat across the desk from Raabia and they each pointed from different sides of the book – Mrs Cooper no longer needed to hold Raabia's hand to assist her. The teacher then asked each child to select their favourite page – and read it. Raabia selected her page but was not able to read it. Mrs Cooper and Raabia read together.

Writing Table – This week each group was to write their sight words on their mini-whiteboards. Raabia had two words – 'I' and 'a', she also wrote 'am' and 'in'. In doing so, Raabia demonstrated that she had learned more than her sight word list and that she could reproduce the words, using well-formed letters.

Observation 4 - 2 March 2011

The class began the morning with a writing session. Mrs Cooper showed the children a soft-toy. Raabia was asked to name the toy, she responded simply – 'a dog'. The class was then asked to describe the dog. As the dog was passed around,

each child was asked to think of a descriptive word or phrase about the dog and put it in a sentence. When it was Raabia's turn she responded – 'The dog has two eyes.'

Mrs Cooper then decided on a sentence for her writing book – 'The dog is furry.' She modelled each word on her small whiteboard and the children then practiced these words, one word at a time on mini-whiteboards. When writing the first word I noted 'Raabia finds it hard – she is near the teacher and Mrs Cooper helps her with 'h' – the next attempt she conquers 't' and 'h' and has a go at 'e' – "good try" (says Mrs Cooper).'

Next the class moved to their desks to write their own sentence about a dog. When the children were seated at their desks with their own writing books, Mrs Cooper moved to Raabia and assisted her to write 'The'. She returned later and assisted Raabia to write 'dog'. A few minutes later Raabia turned to the opposite page and wrote 'The is dog'. Underneath she began to draw a picture of a girl. When Mrs Cooper returned she asked Raabia about the end of the sentence.

Raabia (pointing to her picture) 'It is a little girl.'

Mrs Cooper What about the dog? Is it a little dog? (Raabia continues to point to her picture) Is it furry or fluffy?

Raabia The dog is a baby.

Mrs Cooper Oh ok – you need to write 'a baby'

Raabia writes 'a' – the teacher shows her the letter on her alphabet desk chart but she isn't interested in writing more. The teacher writes 'baby' for her. Later when the class was finishing this activity, Mrs Cooper returned and praised Raabia's work, giving it a 'good work' stamp.

Interpretive comment

It was the fifth week of Kindergarten, as a whole, the class appeared keen to write and confident. The children's attempts were consistently met with praise. Mrs

Cooper's description of the class was powerful – 'kind and encouraging'. Mrs Cooper allowed ample time for each child to attempt work a number of times before having to commit their efforts to paper. Children were encouraged to have 'brave' ideas and Mrs Cooper praised the children's work for its accuracy as well as for being creative.

On the mat, when it was Raabia's turn to add her descriptive phrase (the dog 'has two eyes') she had already heard a number of children give their descriptions and she had had time to construct her contribution. Her response was accurate and appropriate. This was a great change from the first observation where, despite being given a number of prompts, she was unable to give an accurate response that reflected understanding (see Observation 1 – days of the week).

In this classroom, the teacher explained each activity and demonstrated each; she allowed time for the students to hear the ideas of others, to think of their own responses and time to be risk takers, the children's attempts were scaffolded throughout. As a child learning English in a mainstream class, Raabia was given many opportunities to hear clear examples before she had to participate. There were no surprises, language was delivered deliberately and she had an opportunity to practice and to contribute. Her contributions were listened to and often praised.

Observation 5 - 30 March 2011

After a four week break returning to Class KC for the final two observations was very exciting.

Practicing sight words - Raabia was still mostly sitting on her own. However, she had more sight words in her booklet – I, am, a, to, the, at, look – and she willingly practiced these.

Engine Room – After reading with the teacher, with very little assistance, Raabia was able to point to all the words that the teacher called without checking the other children's attempts. The words included – is, the, in, tree, up, little. I noted, she 'is first to find them in her group'.

Mrs Cooper called me over (she had not referred to me in class since the first day of observation), she was 'very happy – and asks me to listen to Raabia read... Mrs Cooper's eyes are glistening and her smile is huge. She has (out of class) told me that she has worried about Raabia – but not today!'

Raabia also knew fifteen class sounds. She only had trouble with 'e' (a new sound that week).

Interpretive comment

Raabia's attempts at reading and writing had become confident. She wrote clearly and knew her sight words, letters and sounds. In four weeks she had learned a great deal and was keen to participate at every opportunity. She continued to enjoy praise and appeared particularly happy when I was called on to hear her reading when she was in the Engine Room. Mrs Cooper's own joy was evident and seemed to have the effect of spurring Raabia on as she continued with her sounds. Raabia's exuberant personality, so evident at home, silenced in the first weeks of school (and initially interpreted as 'spoilt'-ness) had returned. She was now encouraged to enjoy her successes.

Socially, Raabia had still not found obvious friendships. She appeared not to have regular friends to sit with on the mat, while most of the rest of the class sat with the same few children, Raabia still often sat alone. However, in her small group work Raabia appeared to be well accepted.

Observation 6 - 6 April 2011

After Roll Call, Mrs Cooper reminded the class that they had finished learning twenty six sounds. Raabia and Indira (another emergent bilingual child) were called on first to read their sounds. Raabia had difficulty with /e/ and the two girls both found /qu/ and /y/ hard to recall. Mrs Cooper assisted them. The next pair of children selected (also girls) need assistance with seven sounds. The third pair (two boys) gained assistance with almost half of the sounds.

Mrs Cooper then reminded the children that they were to have a test next. At this the children were very excited, as they had been told that they could sit in special seats, including the teacher's chair and the reading chair in the book corner.

'Mrs Cooper reminds the children that there is no wrong way to try to write – but they can ...? – She pauses and allows the children to finish her sentence - the children offer that they can use their sounds' (CO). They then prepared by sounding out an unrelated word and writing it on the teacher's whiteboard.

Mrs Cooper then told the children the story that they were to write for their test:

'I have a big dog at home. Today I am going to take him to school.'

Mrs Cooper It's a long story but we're just going to have a go! (CO)

Mrs Cooper then said the first word – assisting Raabia to find the place to begin (she still had trouble with beginning on the left side of the page consistently - Arabic and English were perhaps still being mixed up).

Raabia wrote: I fua a b dog to m. ot I am go to tk m to sl. (CO) (Figure 5.5)

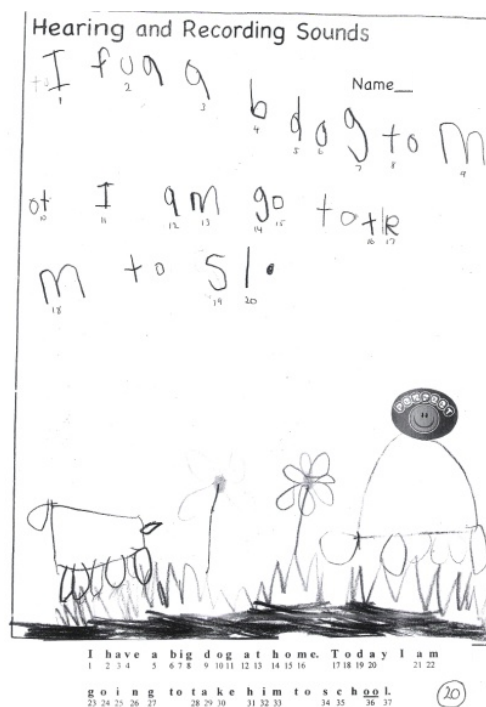


Figure 5.5 Raabia's Term 1 Dictation (CO – 6 April 2011)

Interpretive comment

Raabia's ability to perform in class, reading the class letters and being able to correctly produce 23 of the 26 sounds, was a testament to Raabia's work in her first term at school. Her efforts in the class 'test' were also very exciting.

Mrs Cooper worked carefully to make this activity fun for the children.

Mrs Cooper explained to me that this testing was part of the 'Triple L' literacy programme being used at Fern Wood – the writing was marked out of 37. Each correct letter was given a score of one (also capitals and full-stops). She explained that when the Kindergarten teachers first began the 'Triple L' programme they were overwhelmed by the amount that was expected of them and of the children. However after doing the programme for a few years they were confident in the 'wording of how to do it', in 'saying there are no wrong ways to spell, when you are writing you are always right', she liked seeing the children become risk takers when they write. (Researcher's Reflections)

When I saw Raabia's finished dictation I wrote – 'I am so excited!'

Abhi in Class KC with Ms Chapman (Sunny Hills Public School)

Observation 1 – 25 February 2011

Once the children were seated during my first classroom observation, Ms Chapman began singing 'If you're happy and you know it'. Watching Abhi, I saw her sit alone and a little separate from the rest of the class, in the Listen and Learn Space, she didn't sing but did do the actions.

Ms Chapman introduced the activities for the day, saying, 'Today is Fantastic Friday! We have fitness later and we will have Miss Denny come to teach us Japanese'. In my notes I wrote 'I wonder how Abhi is going – she speaks Malayalam at home, English at school and is learning Hindi – and now Japanese on Fridays. At first glance she seems a bit withdrawn.'

Class greeting - A daily activity was the class greeting, Freya was selected to choose the number of children each student must greet and how they were to greet each other. She decided that each child must say 'good morning' to six other children. The class stood and moved around greeting each other. Abhi was the only child not to participate. She stood to one side, when one or two children sought her out she waved at them a little, but did not speak. When the activity was complete Abhi again sat apart on the mat.

Writing the day's story - Later, sitting in a circle, the class were asked to think of something they like doing and to make a sentence for the class. Ms Chapman's sentence was – 'I like to play drums.' The children took turns around the circle. When Abhi had her turn she was so softly spoken that it took three attempts before she was heard – her sentence, 'I like to play cubby.' After the class completed their sentences, they practiced air writing 'I lik' and then moved back to their desks to draw a picture in their workbooks. Abhi began to draw a picture, when Ms Chapman visited her group of desks, the children again revised how to write 'I lik' by sounding it out and then air writing it together. Abhi was able to suggest one sound – the /k/. They all wrote as much of their sentence as they

could and then finished the matching drawing. Later Ms Chapman finished their sentences.

Rhyming - The final segment of the morning's Literacy Block involved Ms Chapman reading a poem. The children were to listen for rhymes and put their fingers on their noses when they heard one. Ms Chapman read the poem slowly and with exaggerated emphasis when she came to a rhyming couplet. With each rhyme the teacher paused and asked one child to repeat the rhyming words.

Ms Chapman (asks Abhi) what did you hear?

Abhi Sees

Ms Chapman And?

Abhi ?

Ms Chapman (offers) /fl/...

Abhi (supplies) -eas

Ms Chapman Sees and fleas, good.

Again Abhi was able to participate when required, supplying the first word in the rhyming pair and then, with some assistance, being able to supply the ending to the second word.

Observation 2 – 4 March 2011

The week's letter-sound is 'a' - /a/. This week Ms Chapman introduced the mystery bag. Each week an object beginning with the sound of the week is placed in the mystery bag for the children to try and guess. This week the children have guessed – alligator, ant, arrow, apple, ambulance, astronaut and axe. Then it is Abhi's turn to guess...

Abhi Frog

Ms Chapman Frog has /f/ at the beginning.

Ms Chapman shows other pictures - mouse, apple, snake, ant, snail (these answers are all either incorrect or they have already been guessed). Finally they get to pictures of 'animals' – they add 'animals' to their list.

Abhi (puts her hand up) My sister's name is Apala.

Ms Chapman (smiles) Do you think your sister is in the mystery bag? Oh I don't think she'd like it!

Abhi (laughing) NO!

Writing the day's story - The class sat in a circle on the mat. Each child was asked to make a sentence that included – 'I have a ... at home'. This time Abhi was able to say her sentence clearly and loudly enough that everyone could hear her the first time she spoke. Abhi spoke clearly – 'I have a Barbie at home.' As with the previous week's story writing, when the teacher came to assist the students to write their stories, Abhi was able to suggest one of the sounds in the phrase 'I have'. She had already written 'I' before the visit and was able to suggest that the second sound in the word 'have' was /a/.

Observation 3 – 11 March 2011

Class KC had a casual teacher, the morning's literacy block did not follow the regular routine and the children were unsettled by the variation. This allowed a new insight into Abhi's transition. During the first observations she had been reserved though participated upon request. During this session Abhi revealed a little more about her developing friendships.

After the introductory session, the teacher handed out workbooks and Abhi showed her a drawing. Tammy (sitting next to Abhi) spoke up, 'I made that for Abhi!'. Abhi smiled and placed the drawing in front of her as she worked. After completing the first task Abhi waved to her friends as she left the table. She then

went to the reading corner and read a book with Tammy. Tammy put her arm around Abhi's waist as they quietly read together.

Writing the day's story – Today, the class sentence was -'At school I like to ...' Abhi's sentence was, 'At school I play with my friends.' Abhi rejoined the girls at her desk, smiling. However, within a few minutes Abhi had her head in her hands, 'but you're being mean to me,' she said to Ella. Ella's response was to move off to tell the teacher that she was unhappy, saying as she left the table, 'Abhi won't be friends with everyone!' At this Abhi burst into tears, she finished her work in silence, she then moved to the mat to sit alone. By session end the girls on Abhi's table were again friends, laughing and chatting, except for Ella, who had been relocated.

Observation 4 – 18 March 2011

This morning Abhi was asked to read the morning's routine to the class. She stood by the signs, with pictures and words, and read to the class.

Abhi Singing

Ms Chapman K1K (the Kindergarten/Year 1 class in the next room) is coming for sounds

Abhi We have munch and crunch; work; reading; lunch.

Abhi pointed to each sign as she spoke, her voice was strong, the whole class could hear.

Writing the day's story – Ms Chapman introduced the morning's writing session by asking the students to close their eyes and think of 'a place you have been to – maybe it's a place you have visited, someone's house or a holiday'. She then placed three cards in the middle of the circle, on each card was written one word – when, where, who. The class then repeated – 'When is a time; where is a place; who is a person.' Then the teacher modelled a sentence – 'A long time ago I went

to Silver Waters Fun Park with my family.’ Again a soft-toy was passed round the circle and each student had a turn saying their own sentence.

Abhi A long time ago I went swim my mum.

Ms Chapman A long time ago I went swimming with my mum.

During the writing time, Abhi not only drew her story but she began to write it without waiting for the teacher’s support.

At the end of the literacy block I noted – ‘(Ms Chapman’s) modelling is always very deliberate, slowly paced, she asks questions to check understanding... There are lots of opportunities to see what has to happen and to hear and to try.’

Observation 5 – 25 March 2011

Abhi again sat alone during the opening segment of the Literacy Block. While the other children counted down from 10, Abhi watched.

This morning the class routine was altered with the arrival of the Year 6 ‘Buddies’. Each pair of Buddies had a group of five children to play a board game with. Their game, Dinosaur Dance, was a board game where, after rolling a die, the players’ markers were moved around a path. When they landed on a square the player had to check the letter written on that square, then they had to think of a word that began with that letter. Abhi’s first letter was ‘z’ – after a short pause another student suggested ‘zebra’ and Abhi repeated the word. The child who suggested the answer called out ‘I helped you!’ and Abhi smiled in response. While the class played, Ms Chapman moved from group to group. When she came to observe Abhi’s group she asked Abhi a question: ‘What’s a word that begins with /w/?’ Other children offered answers, but Abhi remained silent. For Abhi’s next turn the Buddy asked – ‘What’s a word that begins with /f/? (F was letter of the day.) Abhi replied ‘frog’.

Writing the day’s story – Again Abhi sat alone on the mat, a late arriving girl sat with her. Ms Chapman introduced the topic for their story – Harmony Day

Celebrations. There was a power point slide to remind them of the activities they had enjoyed earlier in the week. After a short class discussion, Ms Chapman handed out the writing books, as she handed each one out she asked the student what they liked best about Harmony Day, and repeated their answer in the form of a whole sentence.

Abhi maked... I made flowers.

Ms Chapman I made flowers.

As the teacher then circulated around the tables she held the 'who' sign and reminded the students that their sentences needed to have certain elements in order for them to be interesting. At Abhi's table Ms Chapman asked

Ms Chapman Who is in your story? Who is it when we talk about ourselves?

The children responded – 'I' and Ms Chapman asked them to write this word (up to this point the children had been drawing a picture about their story). When she found a student who had written more than this, the child was praised. Abhi was commended for writing 'I' and was then asked how she might write 'made' next. The two began to stretch the word together.

Ms Chapman So what is the first sound we can hear?

Abhi /m/

Ms Chapman What letter is that?

Abhi /m/... 'm'

Ms Chapman Yes, (she smiles) you can write that.

They continued until Abhi had found the sounds in 'made' and for this she was praised.

At the end of the morning literacy session, Ms Chapman related to me, her excitement as she had witnessed the class, for the first time, begin to write on their

own. She noted that many of the students had even begun to write before her first visit to their table. I noted, 'she covers her face with her hands, her smile is huge, and then she raises her hands, just a little. It is a Eureka moment!⁵'

Observation 6 – 1 April 2011

Following the introductory segment the Buddies arrived to lead word games and Abhi's group played Dinosaur Dance again. This week Abhi was able to give two words that began with 'w' and one that began with 't', without any assistance. When the game finished Abhi received praise for her efforts and for her good manners.

During Literacy Block, instead of writing a story the class reread *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). Ms Chapman asked the children to remember how the story began, she reminded them that being able to retell a story was 'what good readers do'. This activity of remembering the beginning of the story took some time and a number of prompts from the teacher. When the task was complete, Ms Chapman handed out a worksheet with a picture of Max, the main character, lying on his bed. Underneath was space for the children to retell the beginning of the story and draw their own picture. When Ms Chapman visited her table, Abhi was not able to think of a sentence. Together they looked back at the book to remember the sequence of the story. Later when I checked, Abhi and her neighbour had written the same sentence – "Max said, 'I'll eat you up.'"

Class Greeting – As in Observation 1, the class greeting was conducted, on this day Abhi was selected. Abhi decided that each student would greet two other children with a wave. She then performed a 'hello dance' while the other children moved around the mat area greeting each other.

Next, when all the class were seated, Abhi moved to the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB). There were two sentences written on the board – 'Here is a ball. It is for Tammy.' Next to each sentence was a picture – a ball was next to the first

⁵ 'A Eureka moment' - refers to the experience of suddenly understanding a previously incomprehensible problem or concept.

sentence and a picture of a girl was next to the second sentence. Using the green IWB marker, Abhi was to circle all the words that she knew, then for words that she did not know she was to circle any letters that she recognised in red. Abhi circled every word in green, then read the sentences. Ms Chapman asked how she knew Tammy's name (Tammy being one of Abhi's friends), Abhi responded that she recognised the 'y' at the end of the word.

Ms Chapman I think that Abhi is the first person to read all the sentences. That is because she is practicing a lot at home. That is well done!

Abhi received a sticker for her great reading and the class clapped her efforts.

An aside – During this segment, at the table next to me sat Ella, the girl from Observation 3 who had been unkind to Abhi, she addressed the table of girls she sat with – 'Well, Abhi isn't my friend!'. Whereas during the previous incident the other children had been upset by this behaviour and were silent, this time a girl responded quickly, 'Well, Abhi IS my friend.' Ella continued to speak unkindly about Abhi but none of the other children would join her.

It was interesting to note that during the final observation Abhi was flanked by girls each time she sat in the mat area.

Interpretive comment

Initially, Abhi appeared isolated during the observational sessions, often sitting alone on the mat. She was watchful but participated only when asked by her teacher or approached by a student. Over time Abhi became more confident with the other children, particularly the girls, though she did encounter some continuing difficulties with Ella. She made meaningful and noted connections during Term 1, especially with Tammy and she was able to stand up to pressure from Ella, while I witnessed both these developing relationships, Ms Chapman also referred to them during our interviews. In line with the development of these friendships, Abhi appeared to become more confident in her social and academic interactions in class.

During the writing segment of the third observation, Abhi was able to follow the sentence structure requested and made a sentence with grammatical integrity ('At school I play with my friends.'). This sentence also appeared to reflect her changing social status.

Ms Chapman was an inclusive teacher who encouraged all her students to participate, giving frequent praise and structuring her class time so that there were multiple opportunities each day for students to trial or practice their skills both individually and in small groups. In the latter weeks of observation, Abhi began offering answers. By the fourth observational period Abhi was seen to be an active participant in the class and was able to lead the class in reading the morning's timetable using visual and written cues. During the final session, she showed her confidence and skill in reading the class sentences, the first child in the class to be able to complete the reading unaided. At no point during the six observations was Abhi's bilingual ability mentioned nor was she afforded any assistance or special consideration.

Lane in Class KF with Mrs Fuller (Downtown Public School)

Observation 1 – 28 February 2011

For rollcall Mrs Fuller asked all the children to give a formal response. She would say 'Good morning Name' and the child had to respond, 'Good morning Mrs Fuller'. In the second teacher interview Mrs Fuller noted that she felt it was important for the children to gain as many opportunities to speak as possible and that this included more formal opportunities. Lane was able to do this, softly but clearly, from the first observation.

During the first two observations, the class broke into five groups for their literacy session.

Engine Room – When it was Lane's group's turn to move to the Engine Room the three children sat down quickly and the teacher held up a plastic letter 's'. She asked, 'Who knows this letter?' There was no response, so she continued, '/s/ like a snake. Who can write this letter?' Mrs Fuller assisted Lane to hold her pencil and she wrote the letter 's'.

For the rest of this 10 minute session Mrs Fuller read a graded reader with the small group, *My Little Cat*. Each double page had one sentence and a picture – 'My little cat is in the box.' (or basket, bag, flowerpot, etc). First Mrs Fuller read the book to the group, she then asked the children to reread the book with her. She commended Lane, 'Lane, you have a good memory'.

Writing – Each child was given a sheet with their name on it. They were to trace their name and then practice writing, and draw a picture of themselves. Lane confidently wrote her name, with great concentration, when completed she turned to her neighbour and chatted.

At the end of the five activities Mrs Fuller commended Lane's group for their hard work. Lane and her friend were asked to care for a new girl, during the class mid-morning break, Lane initiated chat with her.

Big Book - At 10.15 the class gathered on the mat to read a Big Book (*The Monster's Party*). On the final double page a monster decides to jump into a jelly, Mrs Fuller asked 'What will happen when it jumps in the jelly?' No one moved or spoke, no hands went up. The teacher moved on, asking the children to do the actions that the monsters in the book were doing, jumping, dancing, singing, tooting a trumpet. Mrs Fuller then instructed the children to complete a tracing activity, to trace a sentence ['I can run.']. The class read the sentence together on the IWB and then looked at their worksheet, recalling the function of a full stop.

Next the teacher played a game with the children. She repeated the sentence beginning 'I can...' adding different endings – jump, touch my toes, touch my head, and touch my knees. Some children needed visual assistance in order to play but Lane was quick to follow.

In my reflection after class, I noted that the class was very noisy but much of the noise was coming from the class on the other side of the open concertina doorway. The concertina wall remained half open in every observational session.

Observation 2 – 7 March 2011

Week 7 of Term 1 and the activities for the morning's five small groups included:

Engine Room – This week in the Engine Room Lane's group again read *My Little Cat*. Again Mrs Fuller read the book with the small group of students looking on. The group then reread the book together, with the children pointing at the words as they went. Following this, Mrs Fuller asked the children to find the word 'my'. She then wrote 'my' on her mini white board, the children then did the same.

Writing – Lane's group continued to practice their writing by writing their names on a worksheet. In Lane's group she was the only one to do this, the two boys in her group spent the 10 minutes quietly throwing the pencils on their desks at other children and onto the floor. But Lane was not to be distracted. She completed her worksheet and was commended by Mrs Fuller who also reprimanded the two boys.

To finish the morning's activities, Mrs Fuller called the children to the mat area and they played a variant of Simon Says. Mrs Fuller asked the children to touch various parts of their body: nose, knee, clap your hand, toes, shoulders, head, ears. Mrs Fuller named the same parts repeatedly. Many of the children were not able to play this game, some checked the teacher or other students before touching any body part. Lane was able to correctly place all the parts except her knees, each time she held her ankles. On her third attempt, Lane checked the teacher and then touched her knees.

Interpretive comment

The classroom during this period of observation was very noisy and unsettled. Lane continued to concentrate throughout the morning. During the teacher interview preceding this observation, Mrs Fuller had mentioned the low numbers of children who had attended preschool, she also noted that the class was very young. Mrs Fuller stated that many of these children did not play games or read books with their parents at home and that this was a disadvantage. I wondered how this teacher viewed Lane's home life and if she would 'count' the role that Lane's siblings played in the literate practices in their family home. I noted, Mrs Fuller 'is calm at all times and she encourages the children, she is firm with discipline, targeting positive behaviour'. She noted in our interview that the large number of boys in her class had added another layer of complexity to this class.

Observation 3 – 14 March 2011 – Numeracy Block

For the third observation, Mrs Fuller invited me to observe her numeracy block in order to see different classroom activities.

I noticed during this observation that the children sit in assigned places in the mat area, I had previously wondered why no one sat alone in this class. Lane sat at the front with a boy on one side and a girl on the other. Today Lane raised her hand to answer every question, a change to previous weeks.

Worksheet – The children received a worksheet and were sent to their desks to write their name. Mrs Fuller explained the activity. On the right hand side of the worksheet were a number of pictures and next to each picture (on the left) were a set of instructions. The first read – ‘Draw three apples on the tree and colour them in red.’ I noted, ‘Lane sits and doesn’t draw anything until the teacher shows her what to do using another child’s worksheet. There is a class helper (ESL teacher) today, she is sitting next to Lane but is helping another student and doesn’t notice Lane’s difficulty.’

Lane finished this first picture and then turned to her neighbour and asked, ‘Can I be your partner?’

Mrs Fuller Look at the next picture on your sheet, can you see the crocodile?
Can you point to the crocodile? Let’s read the instructions – you
have to ‘give the crocodile four teeth and colour the crocodile
green’.

This time Lane appeared to understand the instructions and she began work. She pointed to her work and said ‘four’, then continued. Elsewhere in the class a student didn’t know what ‘teeth’ were, and the teacher’s attention was taken with supporting this child’s efforts. When Mrs Fuller returned to check on Lane’s work she noticed that Lane and her neighbour had not placed teeth in the crocodile’s mouth. ‘Where are your teeth?’ she asked. Lane bared her teeth. Satisfied, Mrs Fuller moved off and the girls kept working. Later when I looked at Lane’s work, I saw that she had coloured the crocodile green and then written the number 4 all over his body... there were still no teeth. Lane repeated this in each subsequent part of the activity.

Number cards – When the class reconvened in the mat area for the next activity, Lane was again commended for her quiet sitting.

Mrs Fuller showed the number cards she was holding and the children called out the number on each card. As I watched, Lane recognised and correctly called four of the ten numbers. Each child was then given a number grid with eight numbers

on it. Mrs Fuller called numbers, showing a number card as she did so. Lane was successful in placing a counter on a number on her card. When Lane realised that her partner from the previous activity was not able to do this activity, she helped her as well as completing her own grid. Mrs Fuller praised Lane for her assistance.

For the final part of the number card activity, Mrs Fuller called numbers (from 1-10) randomly, asking the students to place the correct number of counters in front of them. With each number Lane placed her counters in front of her and then attended to her partner's counters. Again Mrs Fuller praised her for her helpful action.

Interpretive comment

I noted the many children in the class who could not name their body parts. I wondered at the choice of this very ambitious activity. However, I was interested in Lane's ability to negotiate a partner for her work when she did not understand the activity and had no adult support. It was also striking that Lane continued to persevere, working in the midst of a great deal of activity and noise. I also noted the lack of understanding Lane showed in the drawing activity. Lane appeared to understand the task, for example baring her teeth when Mrs Fuller asked where her teeth were, however her finished picture suggested that she had not understood. In a class with so many diverse language and behavioural needs, Lane who was compliant and hard-working and could name many body parts, was overlooked, her language or learning needs missed in the general hubbub.

Observation 4 – 21 March 2011

Lane was away from school sick.

Observation 5 – 28 March 2011

Lane was away for a family celebration.

Observation 6 - 4 April 2011

It was the final week of Term 1, the ESL teacher led a discussion on colour using Easter egg wrappers. Lane was able to correctly identify a green egg. The teacher then used plastic letters to make the names of the colours on a small magnetic white board. She called on Lane to identify the blue letters. Lane picked green ones and had to be prompted twice before she was able to find the blue letters. The accompanying worksheet had pictures of Easter eggs on it, with sentences written next to them. The first was 'I see a green egg'. Lane looked at this sentence and sounded the first word as 'L' rather than 'i'. The second and third words she appeared not to recognise, she stopped trying to read the sentence and began colouring in.

During this activity, students were taken aside to read with Mrs Fuller, Lane was called on. Mrs Fuller showed Lane the book and they looked through it discussing the pictures. Lane was able to point to where to begin reading. Mrs Fuller read each page and then Lane read the same page pointing as she went. Mrs Fuller prompted Lane if she was unsure. At the end of the reading Lane was given the book as her home reader. Mrs Fuller noted that Lane had just begun reading a PM +3 level reader. Mrs Fuller repeated that she found that the Triple L programme did not support her students well, noting 'these children have an enormous gap and many don't know either their letter names or sounds'. But she added, Lane was 'coming along well... Lane knows some words and can point to them'.

Interpretive comment

Lane was repeatedly called on to answer questions with the ESL teacher and her reading was assessed. At a number of levels she showed progress in confidence and skills growth.

A point of interest was how few opportunities students had to interact. While Mrs Fuller had twice mentioned her encouragement of the children to chat 'on task' while working, this had not been occurring. The children who complied with the tasks set tended to sit quietly; while, the children who chatted tended to be

disruptive, throwing pencils or other equipment, interrupting other children. Conversely, there seemed few opportunities for children to be left out of the activity of the class, as was highlighted in the set seating arrangements on the mat, this appeared to aid class management and reduce isolation for new or shy students.

Observation 7 - 2 May 2011

I returned to class in Week 2 of Term 2, a noticeable change was the absence of the Triple L small groups. Mrs Fuller conducted a number of activities with the whole class, each reflected her concern for the children's level of letter/sound knowledge. Mrs Fuller revised all the letters and sounds that the class had learned, followed by revising their sight words. The children pointed to the word on their chart as Mrs Fuller called it out, she held a large copy of their word list and pointed to the word at the same time. The words were: the, and, is, on, a, the, for, is, and, a. Mrs Fuller stood behind Lane, guiding her hand to the correct word three times. Once Lane was guided to a word, she was then able to find that word when it was next called.

For news the children were asked to recount a weekend activity, however the children found this a difficult task. When it was Lane's turn she repeated the news of the child before her. This occurred again in the final observation, however Lane was able to answer a question about her 'borrowed' news.

Observation 8 - 9 May 2011

Matching letters – Lane methodically worked from a to z to match magnetic letters to her alphabet chart. Each observation she had shown her ability to work in the midst of noise, and now she added a new found expertise in matching the letters of the alphabet.

Engine Room – In the Engine Room the new reader was *Sally's Snowman*, again Lane showed her growing expertise, this time in reading. She was able to correctly identify the words: 'at', 'to', 'the' and the new word 'look'.

Interpretive Comment

The two weeks following the beginning of Term 2 highlight a change in Lane. She had clearly mastered a number of letter/sound connections and a small number of sight words. She was also more consistent with raising her hand to answer questions. However, the praise that Lane received continued to be almost exclusively related to her quietness. In the final two observations Lane was praised four times for quietness and only once, as part of a group, for pointing to the correct letter when asked.